

2020

Democracy as Becoming: A Lived Enquiry into Teacher Perspectives of Philosophy for/with Children (P4C) Practice in Irish Educate Together Schools

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/16635>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/1142>

University of Plymouth

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**Democracy as Becoming: A Lived Enquiry into Teacher
Perspectives of Philosophy for/with Children (P4C) Practice in Irish
Educate Together Schools**

by

Gillen Motherway

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**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**

DEMOCRACY AS BECOMING:

**A LIVED ENQUIRY INTO TEACHER PERSPECTIVES OF
PHILOSOPHY FOR/WITH CHILDREN (P4C) PRACTICE IN
IRISH EDUCATE TOGETHER SCHOOLS**

by

GILLEN MOTHERWAY

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfillment
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Plymouth Institute of Education

November 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the help, support and encouragement of several special people, to whom I am immensely grateful:

To my family, Nina and Tess, for their kindness and understanding, my Mam, for the advice and reassurance, and my Dad, for the support and appraisal, without which I would not have been able to get to this point.

To the numerous friends and colleagues who encouraged me throughout, especially the children, teachers and staff of the lived school I spent so long in, the other Educate Together schools that invited me inside their doors and the friendships made through Philosophy Ireland and other philosophical collaborations.

To Hibernia College Dublin, for awarding me a fully funded PhD scholarship, without which this research would not have been possible, along with the support and insight of Dr. Theresa Whitaker and Andy Whelan. Thank you for helping make this happen.

Most especially to Sheila, for all the encouragement and support, for being there when life gets in the way, and for helping pick up all the pieces (mortgages, weddings, babies etc.) that get left behind along the PhD road. Thank you so much.

Finally, to my supervisors, Dr. Joanna Haynes and Dr. Fintan McCutcheon. The shared wisdom and passion from both echoes throughout this writing, and will no doubt continue throughout all philosophical, educational and democratic enterprises in the future. Thank you for helping me on my journey down the rabbit hole.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Education has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

This study was financed with the aid of a scholarship from Hibernia College Dublin and carried out in collaboration with Hibernia College Dublin.

Publications:

Motherway, G. 2018. 'Democratic Education and Educating for Democracy' in Duthie, E., García Moriyón, F. and Robles Loro, R. (eds.). 2018. Family Resemblances - Current Trends in Philosophy for Children. Madrid, Anaya.

Motherway, G. 2017. Researching Philosophy with Children in Irish Schools. Literacy Association of Ireland, Spring Newsletter May 2017. Dublin, LAI.

Presentations at conferences:

Plymouth University Postgraduate Conference, Plymouth, UK, June 2015.
Presentation Title: 'Considering a Deweyan Framework of Enquiry'.

Plymouth University Postgraduate Conference, Plymouth, UK, June 2016.
Presentation Title: 'John Dewey's Theory of Enquiry and Research Methods'.

Public Launch of Philosophy Ireland, Dublin, Ireland, August 2016.

Presentation Title: ‘Philosophy in Primary Schools: Teachers’ Perspectives and Experiences’.

Hibernia College Research Conference, Dublin, Ireland, November 2016.

Presentation Title: ‘What is Philosophy for Children?’.

ICPIC (International Conference on Philosophical Inquiry with Children)

Biannual Conference, Madrid, Spain, June 2017. Presentation Title: ‘Exploring Philosophy with Children Practice in Irish Classrooms. Perspectives from a Lived Enquiry’.

LAI (Literacy Association of Ireland) Annual Conference, Dublin, Ireland, October 2017. Presentation Title: ‘Researching Philosophy with Children Practice in Irish Educate Together Schools: Some Insights and Perspectives’.

Philosophy Ireland Public Conference, Dublin, Ireland, May 2018. Presentation Title: ‘Philosophy in the Public Sphere’.

Dialoguing Democracy, NUI Galway, May 2019. Presentation Title: Democracy as ‘Becoming’: P4C, Democracy and Educate Together – A lived Enquiry.

Word count of main body of thesis: 78,205

Signed:

Gillen Motherway

Dated:

02.11.2020

Gillen Motherway

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the practice of Philosophy for/with Children (P4C) in Irish Educate Together schools through teacher perspectives, encompassing wider themes of education and democracy in Ireland. Within this exploration is a focus on the articulation and analysis of teachers' accounts of how they reconcile P4C pedagogies with their own educational outlooks within a P4C/Educate Together context, comprised of both their particular Educate Together school and the movement as a whole. The historical, social and political factors that led to the Educate Together movement's development are charted, alongside other factors related to distinctive approaches to P4C practice in Ireland. The outcomes of this study show that focusing on child-centered perspectives expands and extends democracy as emergent and democracy as 'a way of life', particularly in terms of the possibility of democratic education in Ireland, enabled and enhanced through a P4C/Educate Together context.

This research is a lived enquiry, involving deep immersion in the research environment as an embedded extern – that is, as both a researcher and a P4C practitioner. The 'livedness' of this research incorporates the social dimension of John Dewey's theory of enquiry, where a combination of lived experiences and dialogic exchanges were fused together by the social relationships forged throughout my research journey. A thematic analysis of participant interviews encase the unfolding events of this reflexive practitioner research.

This study reveals an interrelationship between P4C and Educate Together that encompasses the shared territories of dialogue and child. Such an interrelationship enables the creation of democratic spaces, inhabited by both adults and children, and facilitated by Irish Educate Together teachers engaging

in P4C within their classrooms, expressed through the idea of democracy as ‘becoming’. Such a contextual space provide opportunities for adults and children to live and learn *in* and *through* democratic processes. By showing how democracy can be enacted as a living value in this way, the implications of this study point towards the importance of educational policy and practice at a time when global educational policy seems to be moving further and further towards a market-led consumer-based idea of education, where standards of attainment, centralised models and technical rationality is priority. Further implications of this study relate to educational research, particularly practitioner research, with regard to the depth of insight revealed through a lived enquiry as an embedded extern, and concern the conceptualisation and realisation of an emergent sense of democracy where children are central.

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INTRODUCTION

Formulating my Research

This study is motivated by my search for a place for philosophy that was both personally meaningful and consistent with my values of social justice and equality as an Irish person living in Ireland. It sets in words my research journey, from originally viewing the study as a philosophical enquiry based upon John Dewey's theory of enquiry, to adopting a 'lived' enquiry approach that encompasses and emphasizes Dewey's social dimension of enquiry. My study focuses on the perspectives of Educate Together teachers engaging in P4C practice that embraces Dewey's social aspect of enquiry as an unfolding of lived experience and meaning making by participation and activity through interconnected social spheres and communities. These spheres and communities encompass the teachers who took part in the research, the other teachers and staff in the 'lived' school (the school where most of my research took place), teachers and educationalists in different schools and institutions around Ireland, and fellow P4C practitioners and philosophical enthusiasts.

This thesis explores relationships and interconnections between Educate Together and P4C through the lived perspective of teachers working in Educate Together schools and for whom engagement in philosophical dialogue with the children in their classrooms is a personal and meaningful practice, thus shedding light on the notions of education and democracy that exist in an Educate Together context and providing an insight into democratic practices in these classroom settings. The decision to focus only on Educate Together schools for this study was a deliberate one. There were many diverse people I encountered throughout the course of my research – educationalists, P4C practitioners, teachers, philosophy graduates and enthusiasts – all of whom were

interested in some way or other in the idea of philosophy in Irish schools. However, the Educate Together teachers I came across revealed themselves to me as a unique group *within* a group. I recognised a commonality across six Educate Together teachers who, although they did not know one another, were all interested in their schools and their teaching becoming more democratic. The vast majority of people I came across through the research process were interested in some aspect of P4C – as a means of developing critical thinking skills, academic achievement or moral development – I even met several teachers who viewed P4C as being particularly relevant to their own school. But none of these people were specifically focused on democracy or child-centeredness. The Educate Together teachers I encountered may not have been hugely philosophically ‘qualified’ compared to others I met throughout my research journey, but they were unique in that they talked about changing understandings of education and schooling. Through their classroom practice they seemed to recognise P4C’s potential for change in democratic and child-centred ways. They struck me as being concerned with aligning themselves with and personalising the principles of democracy and child-centeredness. I became interested in learning how these teachers were trying to find saliences in their practice, and doing things in order to be the kind of teacher they felt they could become in an Educate Together school.

This thesis offers an original contribution to knowledge by exploring, articulating and analysing teachers’ accounts of how they reconcile their P4C pedagogies with their own educational outlooks within the context of both their individual Educate Together school and within the movement as a whole. By exploring teachers’ experiences of P4C practice and how it affects their wider pedagogical outlooks, greater insight into the motivations of teachers to improve classroom practices from an ethical and democratic perspective is achieved. Research about Educate Together has focused primarily on the

movement's significance in terms of multid denominational, intercultural and pluralistic education in schools in the Republic of Ireland (Lynch and Baker, 2005; Mulcahy, 2006; Lalor, 2013; Hyland, 2015). This research examines outlooks regarding education and democracy seen through the perspectives of teachers' P4C practice located within an Educate Together context, and considers these ideas in relation to Educate Together both as a movement in itself and as an educational body. Such outlooks are especially pertinent in light of more recent events by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) proposal for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics in Irish primary schools (NCCA, 2016a) and the development of a Junior Cycle short course in Philosophy in Irish secondary schools (NCCA, 2016b). These actions follow intensifying calls from various factions for the inclusion of the subject of philosophy in Irish schools and curricula (Donnelly, 2014; Grant, 2014; Humpreys, 2012; 2013; 2014), pointing to a growing belief amongst teachers and teaching professionals in the educational value of philosophical enquiry in Irish classrooms.

However, it also shows a determination that responsibility for developing, cultivating and administrating educational values should lie with those professionals themselves, rather than with that traditionally in Ireland has come under the remit of the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, the increased demand for multi-denominational schools in Ireland has seen Educate Together as an organisation become the fastest-growing school patron in Irish education (Flynn, 2009). All this considered adds weight to the claim that there is evidence to show an unarticulated yet deeply felt desire amongst certain sections of Irish society for more choice, equality and depth of teaching and learning within the Irish education system. In an attempt to articulate such desires and address such a situation, this study sets out to explore how teachers understand their role in the context of democratic educational policies in

Ireland. Considering these issues and the questions they raise, the research question formulated to guide an enquiry into this situation was:

What insights into education and democracy can be gained from a lived enquiry into teachers' perspectives on P4C practice in a group of Irish Educate Together primary schools?

This section provides a brief overview of how this thesis is structured, outlining where some key concepts are addressed and the content of each chapter. Chapter One presents the context for the study, setting the scene of the research by showing how the Educate Together movement emerged from an Irish educational system presided over in the main by a singular denominational body, namely the Roman Catholic Church. By tracing this development, the expression of the character and principles upon which Educate Together is built are articulated as equality-based, co-educational, child-centeredness and schools that claim to be democratically run. It is suggested that educational provision in Ireland, before the emergence of Educate Together, can be viewed as not centrally concerned with teaching about democracy or being institutions that are democratically run, in either thought or practice. Chapter Two considers ideas surrounding the concept of democratic education and education for democracy, explicating the various concepts involved in civic education for democracy. The theoretical ideas underpinning democracy as a way of life are presented in terms of the close relation between education and democracy. John Dewey's notion of democracy as a mode of associated living forms a basis for such a discussion, and his views on democracy as a form of community life that is constantly changing are considered with regard to the Irish educational context. It is suggested here that, through the domain of the school, democracy might be 'lived' in schools and classrooms, echoing Dewey's ideas of the school as fundamental to the life of the community and of citizens, and emphasising how the structural creativity and practices of individual schools can be seen to be

tremendously important in terms of their wider social responsibility, citizenship and democratic discourses.

Chapter Three reviews the landscape of literature on P4C both globally and nationally, focusing on developments of the practice in Ireland. The theoretical underpinnings of P4C as a diverse spectrum of approaches are explored, with particular focus on the centrality of ‘child’ within the practice. Some of the claims and challenges of P4C practice are explored in order to contextualise the perspectives of P4C practiced amongst the Irish Educate Together teachers that participated in this study. Chapter Four delineates the lived enquiry approach taken for this study, describing the various methods used to establish social relationships to explore teachers’ perspectives and values as a group of democratic practitioners. Chapter Five presents an interpretation of the semi-structured interviews conducted with six of these practitioners. A thematic analysis approach was adopted to develop an informed and contextualised elucidation of participants’ conceptions of education and democracy. In Chapter Six, this context is explored, drawing on Fielding’s (2016) ideas of relational democracy. It asserts that a democratic space, characterised by democratic living and becoming, emerges from the partnership between P4C and Educate Together as social movements and bound by the central thread of child as citizen. This chapter discusses the notion that, because there exists a ‘contemplative’ rather than a ‘templative’ notion of the values and principles of democracy within Educate Together leadership, teachers drawn to P4C are free to pursue democratic practices according to their own conception of democracy, reflecting a plurality of understandings around living democratically in their classrooms and a sense of democracy as ‘becoming’. This aspirational approach to democracy within a P4C/Educate Together context is pivotal for the creation of broad opportunities for democratic

engagement within the site of the individual school where adults and children live and learn through a democracy, side by side with one another.

Background to my Research Journey

This research is born out of my belief in the value of philosophy being at odds with my experience of studying it at university. As an undergraduate and then postgraduate philosophy student between 2001 and 2005, I found little difference between the teaching of philosophy and the teaching of the *history* of philosophy. It seemed to me that the development of the Western philosophic tradition resembled a lengthy debate with a focus on winning the contest, consisting of abstracted theories and recurring themes repeating in an unending cycle of argument and counter-argument. However, I did enjoy the stimulating conversations and discussions that these abstracted concepts prompted in my class groups and the insightfulness and reflection that would result. Studying philosophy allowed me to reflect on my own thought processes and to have a greater awareness of how I thought about things in many different kinds of ways in my life.

And yet I was dissatisfied. The experience of studying philosophy was isolating and atomised. I felt cut off, but I was not sure from what. The incisive conversations and discussions with my fellow classmates in university occurred all too infrequently and nearly always during class time, where they were precipitated by the lecturer and did not occur naturally or informally. When I stumbled across Jostein Gaarder's "Sophie's World" (1994), a book in narrative form about the history of philosophy aimed at teenagers, I immediately felt I could relate to both Sophie's experience of gradually understanding her patterns of thought that emerged as she tackled classic philosophical questions and arguments left in her post-box by a stranger, but also the sense of isolation she must have felt thinking through the different thought experiments on her own. It

felt as though philosophy was neither desirable nor accessible to very many people, even though I believed it should be of great value.

The experience of studying the subject of philosophy at university was one of the reasons why, after graduating, I went to live and work as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan for three years, a country I had no previous connection with and little knowledge of. After four years of studying Western philosophy at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, I began to reflect upon my experiences and embrace different modes of thinking that either questioned or existed beyond the Western philosophic tradition I was accustomed to. Broadly speaking, philosophy in Irish universities tends to focus on the theoretical aspects of the subject, and I began to see my dissatisfaction with it in terms of a struggle to find an outlet for it in a more practical way. I started to notice approaches to philosophical thinking associated with Eastern traditions such as Zen Buddhism, which seemed less technically rigorous, more applicable to one's life story and which focused on the *practice* of philosophy. I became interested in the pragmatist philosophical movement, as both a philosophical method and an outlook on the Western philosophical tradition as a whole. Within philosophy's vast corpus, I struggled to conceive how the theoretical and the conceptual could be made practical. I could not reconcile my experience of philosophy's usefulness for critical and analytical thinking with what I perceived as its lofty claim as occupying *the* central position within human understanding. My concern with philosophy was largely intuitional and based on my desire to *live* the attributes of philosophical thinking in more practical ways, socially, politically and ethically.

Between 2006 and 2009 whilst teaching English in public primary and junior high schools in Japan, I began to realise a practice-based connection between education and philosophical thinking. I drew similarities between the incredibly strict and regimented school system there and the one in which I

experienced as a secondary school student in Ireland – classrooms were meant to be silent, teaching involved getting students to memorise vast amounts of information, and questions, thoughts and voices, other than the teacher's, were unwelcome. My time spent teaching in Japan impressed upon me what I perceived to be a need for independent thinking, listening and discussion with and amongst young people. I thought it was deeply unfair how all of the teaching and lessons seemed orientated towards standardised testing with little or no focus on discussion and what was meaningful for the students. Although my job was to teach English to Japanese public school children, I utilised my position in whatever way I could to encourage engagement with the language in as discursive a way as possible, often disregarding the required memorisation of grammar and sentence structures. I began introducing classic philosophical questions and ideas into my English lessons in addition to the prescribed language curriculum as much as possible – asking deeper, critical and 'self' related questions not contained within the reading comprehensions, encouraging students to discuss topics of philosophical importance and even introducing the lives and basic ideas of famous philosophers whenever I could. I slowly began to understand why it was that I had always preferred to have a good deep conversation about a topic rather than read about it in a book – I had a proclivity for dialogue, which I had not been conscious of until that time. I was convinced from my experience there that the answer to what I sought lay with the development of philosophical thinking in educational settings.

My search for a place where philosophy could be *done, lived* everyday as a practice, rather than just being thought about, stems from a commitment to personal values of social equality and justice, and a belief in the existential meaningfulness of engaging in philosophical reflection, dialogue and discourse. This commitment became realised through reflecting upon my thoughts and practice of philosophy and education. It does not rely wholly upon a singular

text – it is a situated response to a disconcerting impression of philosophy that sparked a deep-seated re-evaluation of my understanding of the subject and my connection to it. My research journey began with a certain feeling of dissatisfaction that did not sit right with me after studying the subject in university, and has lead me on a path of discovery, possibility and reflective practice in terms of democratic education, of practicing P4C and of the possibilities of philosophy in Irish schools.

This research provides an insight into wider themes of education and democracy in Ireland through teachers' perspectives on their P4C practice in terms of how it relates to their classroom, their individual Educate Together school and their broader outlooks on education for democratic citizenship. It is composed of an unfolding of lived experiences as I, as researcher, participated and engaged with many different people in diverse and interconnected social spheres. Having become embedded in the life of the lived school, this study attempts to articulate the richness and depth of teachers' accounts of how they reconcile P4C pedagogies with their own educational outlooks. The research unfolds as the different participatory social spheres resonate with one another and interconnect with myself located in the middle, expounding the various concepts and ideas that are revealed as I struggle to find links between participants' views and practice with the dynamism of their schools, classrooms and the broader Educate Together and P4C movements. What is revealed is a democratic space opened up by P4C practice in an Educate Together context, which I articulate as a sense of an emergent understanding of democracy as 'becoming' – a new and different outlook towards democracy as an ongoing unfixed project of 'becoming' democratic centred with, around and through children. This sense of exemplifying the idea of becoming democratic emerges through the stitching together of the dynamism of practitioner research, as it is sown into a rich patchwork of perspectives. Research that comprises such

perspectives, as this thesis does, offers new insights into practitioner research, within wider discourses about education and democracy in Ireland, particularly those concerning P4C practice, democratic education and philosophy in Irish schools.

CHAPTER ONE:

Educate Together within an Irish Educational Context

Introduction

This chapter traces the development of the Educate Together movement within the Irish education system in order to explain the wider context of my research. It places the development of such a movement within a historical context by looking at the forces that shaped Irish education over many decades. It begins by providing a brief overview of historical, cultural and social circumstances including the complex relationship between church and state in Ireland. After this, the changing social and political conditions in Ireland which gave rise to Educate Together and its subsequent growth over forty years or so is examined. The historic and societal changes are viewed within the wider perspective of democracy and education in Ireland, and dealt with in tandem with the emergence of the Educate Together movement as a response to these changes. The ideology underpinning Irish educational provisions is also explored, with brief references to how education reproduces the standards and conventions of those in positions of power, raising questions about whether the cultural pattern being reproduced served the best interests of every member of Irish society. The idea of child-centredness, a core principle upon which the Educate Together movement is built, is focussed upon as a shared territory with P4C. In doing so, it serves as a means of understanding how education and democracy in Ireland has been represented in the past and where Educate Together as an organisation is situated within the Irish socio-cultural landscape.

Education in Ireland – Historical Perspectives of Church and State

The cultural changes that have taken place in Irish society in recent years are a significant development from Ireland's historical past which can be characterised as monotheistic, mono-cultural and overwhelmingly white (Devine, 2005). Education in Ireland has, historically speaking, always been presided over and heavily influenced by a singular denominational body, the Roman Catholic Church. Buachalla (1985) described this situation as an 'aided system' in which the state assists other agencies mainly by means of funding to provide educational services at all three levels. The Irish state's involvement in the provision and management of education can be traced back to the first half of the 19th century with the publication of a letter written by the Chief Secretary of Ireland at the time, Lord Stanley. His 1831 letter outlined how education might be arranged in Ireland under British rule, since the Penal Laws restricted Catholic access to education. In the letter, he proposed the establishment of a Board of Commissioners for National Education who would take a favorable view of applications from both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic Churches to establish and jointly manage schools. Hyland (1993) claims that although some of the schools formed through the Board were jointly managed, the main Christian Churches put pressure on the government to allow aid to be given to schools under the management of individual Churches.

Even today, there are some provisions within the Stanley Letter that have had a lasting effect on the Irish education system, particularly concerning financial support from a central government and giving autonomy to local, usually denominational, management groups. Other elements that have survived in one form or another relate to the role and responsibilities of the local management of schools. At this local level, school buildings were usually

operated by local trustees, the patronage of which was taken up by individuals who took the initiative to start the school in the first place (usually the local clergy). This meant that the school manager was based locally and a member of the clergy responsible for hiring and dismissing staff, distributing wages and overseeing the general operation of the school. This situation, which enabled schools to be under the control and patronage of individual denominational groups, was untouched up until the foundation of the Irish State in 1922. The newly founded Irish state suddenly found itself reluctant to interfere in this situation. Coolahan (1981) suggests that at the time, the Irish state, when faced with questions regarding what form and direction the education of its citizens should take, attempted to reassert Irish culture after years of British colonial rule through the education system:

... inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism it was held that the schools ought to be the prime agents in the revival of the Irish Language and native tradition which it was held were the hallmarks of nationhood and the basis for independent statehood (Coolahan, 1981: p.40).

Kelly (1995) considers the social institution of education to be the place where more than anywhere else “it is vital that our democratic principles pervade, in order that those principles be clearly communicated to the rising generation of future citizens, and moreover that they be so communicated through practice as well as preaching” (p.102). Parker (1996) contends that democracy does not come naturally to any new democratic state – education is key to the adoption of such attitudes and values and must be learned, something which Dewey would agree with by viewing education’s function as the creation of a democratic consciousness (Dewey, 1897). Given the violent beginnings of the Irish state in 1922, and the subsequent civil war that followed soon after, Garvin (1996) suggests that the Irish state’s creation of stable democratic institutions has been remarkable in terms of its success. However, as Prager

(1986) notes, the thinking of the social leaders of the revolution was not political, rather it was ethical, based firmly upon a worldview formed by a Catholic hierarchy. The achievement of institutional stability, according to Prager (1986), was due to the creation of a cultural consensus based on the moulding of a sense of identity. Waldron (2004) notes that the weakness within Ireland's education ideology lies with the view that relations between education and society were "unproblematic" (p.229). Irish society was not homogenous at the time and the two largest forces were an Anglo-Irish tradition, secularized with influences from Enlightenment era ideas, and a Gaelic-Romantic tradition that looked to revive the traditions and heritage of the past. Prager considers the "centrality of culture" that created political stability, forged through "the degree of value consensus and normative agreement shared by all members of the nation" (1986: p.18), to be key. This drive towards cultural homogeneity absorbed previously existing cultural differences in the beginnings of Ireland's newfound statehood into a larger homogenous way of thinking about Irish identity that was inherently connected to a Catholic worldview. However, this transition was not seen as a straightforward step towards democratization by everyone. Akenson (1975) notes that education in the newly formed state lacked any transformative role whatsoever: "In no area was the essential conservatism of the revolution more clearly exemplified than in the refusal of the new government to change fundamentally the school systems inherited from the imperial administration" (p.25). This stands in direct contrast to Dewey's belief that change and transformation is a fundamental feature of a democratic society. These set of circumstances paint a picture of the school in a newly independent Ireland as instantiating the society in which it was located through the upholding of tradition and the status quo.

Ireland assumed, much like the British administrative rule in the 19th century who themselves saw the school system as an agent for "socializing

goals, cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation” (Akenson, 2004: p.4), that the education system would serve to promote its idea of culture and citizenship. Along with the direction that educational provisions in the state would take, the Irish government also had to contend with the ownership of the schools themselves. The Catholic Church had provided resources for the provision of education for years before the founding of the state and now owned significant property and resources, something that the newly found government of Ireland was reluctant to challenge due to the support the Catholic Church had amongst the majority of the populace. It was considered best not to antagonize an organization that wielded such extensive influence and enormous power by an Irish government presiding over a newly found state divided by a civil war still fresh in its memory. This government lacked both the political will and resources to challenge the Church’s power over education in Ireland, hence Murphy’s (2008) assertion that “[t]he privileged position accorded to the Catholic Church in the provision of education in the Republic of Ireland allowed for the exercise of a type of cultural hegemony which enabled it to build itself into the very ‘vitals of the nation’” (p.30-31). This situation gave rise to a mutual relationship between the church and the state, where both benefited from the church’s control of an education system that was pivotal to underpinning and cementing certain ideas around the generation of an Irish identity. These ideas revolving around the creation of an Irish culture determined mainly through its language and traditional sports, all under the wardship of a powerful church (Kearney, 2007).

This mutually beneficial church and state relationship remained undisturbed until the 1960s, at which point ideas around the notion of Irish identity became a subject of discussion and debate. The year 1966 saw the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, an event in Irish history that is widely regarded as beginning Ireland’s quest towards

independence. A certain degree of socio-economic change was underway in the country during this period, with changes in technology such as the creation in 1961 of RTE, the national television service, and an increase in foreign visitors contributing to a sense of national curiosity and discussion. Additional factors that may have broadened such discussion was Ireland's membership of the European Economic Community in 1973, and with it the return of some emigrants to Ireland who had lived and worked overseas (many of whom would have experienced societies considerably more multi-cultural than that at home), and the availability of grant aid to access university education. The introduction of free second level education by Donogh O'Mally in 1967, a costly and controversial move back then, is seen today as a milestone of social mobility and cultural change in Irish historical terms, considering at the time about one third of children who finished primary school were dropping out of education (O'Brien, 2017). Overall this period in history saw people shifting their gaze outwards beyond Ireland, educating themselves and learning from the various movements and social dynamics of the time that were taking place on a global scale, increasing their confidence and in turn questioning traditional auspices of authority and challenging systems of knowledge and control (Prager, 1986).

The confidence and hopefulness of this period was tempered by the fact that traditional auspices of authority remained in power and the Irish school system was still under the control of the Catholic Church. This was further etched into national policy by a number of developments on a legislative level that effectively enshrined the Church's control into educational provision in Ireland by granting official recognition of the denominational character of schools and the Church's influence in educational matters. The National School Curriculum which was published in 1971 declared that religious and secular education should be combined and disseminated throughout the curriculum, unconfined to designated time periods for instruction, further strengthening the

Church's control over educational practice. It should be noted, however, that the National School Curriculum (1971) did represent a seismic shift in attitudes towards the education of children in Ireland in general when seen as a document underpinned by the ideology of child-centered education. It offered a wide variety of subjects and endorsed discovery learning methods, allowing for greater flexibility in selecting learning content and methodologies and setting the tone for subsequent curriculum development still being delivered in the 21st Century (Walsh, 2016). While the practical implementation of the curriculum was weakened by a lack of confidence and competency engaging with the progressive educational ideas it contained (INTO, 1988), the principles of the curriculum were widely welcomed by teachers and it stands as an achievement within Irish education by empowering decision-making at a school level.

The collaboration between legislative and curricular practice posed huge difficulties for parents who did not want their children to be educated within a denominational environment or receive religious instruction during the school day. Even today, there remains a huge imbalance towards schools under religious patronage, especially in Irish primary schools:

In Ireland, eight years of primary schooling (age five to twelve) are followed by five or six years of second level or post-primary schooling (age thirteen to eighteen). Primary schools and most second-level schools are privately owned (overwhelmingly by religious bodies, principally the Catholic Church), but publicly funded. The funding by taxpayers of privately-owned schools is a very significant and distinctive feature of the Irish educational landscape. Today, with three thousand primary schools in Ireland, 90 percent of pupils attend primary schools owned and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church and 6 percent attend schools controlled by Protestant churches. Two schools are operated by the Irish Islamic community and one by the Jewish community. There are now [eighty two] multi-denominational primary schools, relatively recently established by parents, attended by about 2 percent of the school-going population and co-

ordinated by a national body called “Educate Together” (Hyland and Bocking, 2015: p.254).

Hyland (1993) contends that a response to this problem was for a number of parents to enroll their children in the nearest Church of Ireland (Protestant) school since there was a belief that the religious ethos in those schools were “less pervasive than that of Catholic schools” (p.3). One particular school became pivotal to the difficulties faced by parents in this situation, and their attempts to enroll their children in this school would have far-reaching repercussions on the provision of education in Ireland.

Education in Ireland – Emergence of the Educate Together Movement

The Educate Together movement emerged from the efforts of parents seeking to send their children to a multi-denominational school that would eventually culminate in the opening of the Dalkey School Project in 1978. Exasperated by their attempts to enrol their children in the local Church of Ireland primary school, parents in the south Dublin suburb of Dalkey who did not want to send their children to a Catholic school, wrote a letter in June 1974 expressing their desire for an educational environment that was not dominated by any single religious ideology for their children (Hyland, 1993). They proposed the setting up of a school with several key principles they believed should lie at the heart of such a school: that it should be child-centred, co-educational and multi-denominational, with a management committee that would be predominantly democratic in character. Hyland (1993) describes the challenges such parents faced:

The task confronting the Project was formidable. The national school system had been undisturbed for over 100 years. There was an established equilibrium between the Department of Education, the Churches and the

Irish National Teachers Organisation, the only teacher union representing primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland. There was a price for the Churches' control of education; they provided sites for schools and they paid the local contribution towards the capital and running costs of their schools... Apart from the time and energy expended on the Project, the financial costs had been substantial – [there was] the local contribution towards the cost of setting up the temporary premises, the cost of the new building and the cost of purchasing the site... (Hyland, 1993: p.4-5).

Opening its doors in September 1978, the Dalkey School Project was first housed in a temporary building before moving to a permanent purpose built structure in 1984. Although it encountered some opposition both political and ecclesiastical (Hyland, 1993), the success of its creation inspired other groups to set up similar schools in other areas, mainly the Dublin region. The Bray School Project, another area situated in the south Dublin area, opened in 1981. The North Dublin National School Project opened in 1984 in the Glasnevin area of north Dublin, an important development itself as the first such school to open in the north of the capital and acting as further motivation for other such schools to open in that side of the city as well. As these developments grew, there was recognition of the need for an organizing body to collaborate and support both existing and emerging groups following the lead of the Dalkey School Project. Educate Together was established in 1983 as the representative body of these groups and several more schools opened between 1987 and 1990. In 1990, Educate Together formally launched its Charter, articulating the same values and principles laid down by the Dalkey School Project and which are representative of the entire movement to this day:

It is remarkable that from the original document at the founding meeting of the Dalkey School Project... to the current definition in the Educate Together Charter there has been only minor textual changes. This is a testament to the accuracy with which these principles and aims were defined at that time (Rowe, 2003: p.2).

The principles upon which Educate Together schools were founded are child-centeredness, co-educationalism, multi-denominationalism and democracy. In 1998, a National Office was established to represent this growing sector in the Irish education system, gaining the recognition of the Department of Education that an Educate Together patron could stand for more than just one school. The incorporation of the national body allowed for the development of a centralised model of patronage, with the result that schools opened since 2000 are under this central patronage of Educate Together. The Irish state did away with the requirement for Educate Together schools to provide their own sites for school buildings in 1999 along with the requirement to pay 15% of the building costs of any new school. These requirements had been a serious barrier to developing new schools and its removal paved the way for further growth of both the sector and the movement. The term ‘Project’ was dropped when naming new schools as it became more accepted that this sector in Irish education could no longer be considered ‘experimental’ or ‘temporary’ as such a term may imply.

In 2011, Ruairi Quinn (Minister for Education between 2011 and 2014) set up a ‘Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector’, which heard submissions from a wide spectrum of interest groups spread across Irish society and to which Educate Together made a number of contributions. The Forum sought to report to the Minister “how it can best be ensured that the education system can provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools catering for all religions and none” (Coolahan, Hussey and Kilfeather, 2012: p.3). The report was published in 2012, observing that “[t]here is now a mismatch between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society” (Coolahan, Hussey and Kilfeather, 2012: p.1). It was recommended by the Forum that government policy on the provision of

education should focus on catering for diversity among new schools in areas of rising population – areas where there is a sufficient amount of schools for local population needs but where parental demand for alternative school patronage exists, the transfer of schools from existing patrons to the State and for re-distribution to new patrons should be facilitated (Coolahan, Hussey and Kilfeather, 2012: p.26). It also recommended that ‘stand alone’ schools, which serve local communities, should be able to respond more effectively when new student cohorts comprise children of different faiths and none, or of parents who do not wish their children to receive denominational religious education (Coolahan, Hussey and Kilfeather, 2012: p.26).

The phrase ‘from the bottom up’ is an adage that I believe justifiably expresses how Educate Together operates itself as an organization. According to Rowe (2000), it is as a result of the struggle against formidable difficulties by small local groups of parents, teachers and educationalists vital to establishing Educate Together schools that questions of ethos assume central importance in the life of an ET school. The written statement of a school’s ethos acts as a “litmus test” for the appropriateness or validity of a wide variety of school practices and activities (Rowe, 2000: p.4). An Educate Together school clearly defining a set of unifying principles and attitudes like this “creates a zone of security within which can flourish vigorous debate on interpretation and implementation” (Rowe, 2000: p.5). This, according to Rowe (2000), is reflected in the “continuous self analytical passionate debate that is at the core of the development of Educate Together” (p.3). This commitment to debate is evident through the variety of different activities that Educate Together organizes that aim towards dialogue and discussion: Annual General Meetings, education conferences and seminars, general and themed meetings, with keynotes on educational issues of importance to the ET movement, conferences and courses for school leaders, and meetings between Educate Together school

‘clusters’ (schools located in the same region). These things indicate a purposeful move to be and to remain unfixed and open dialogically as an organization, rather than through a lack of provision of directives and circulars. Rooted within Educate Together as an organization and how it operates is a ‘bottom up’ as opposed to a ‘top down’ sense of evolving, dialogically driven rather than directive driven. This sense feeds into unfixed approaches to dialogue and discussion about what child-centred education is, or ought to be, to an experimentation and respectfulness to one another to try things out in each school’s differing contexts. The hopefulness and exceptionality of this approach stands very much in opposition to the current neo-liberal climate and dominant attitudes towards public education today.

Today, the number of Educate Together schools throughout Ireland continues to grow. As of 2020, there are 92 Educate Together national schools operating and providing more than 20,000 out of an estimated 567,000 primary school places to students around Ireland (Educate Together, 2020; O’Brien, 2018). Since 2014, Educate Together have expanded into the area of second level education. Currently there are 17 secondary schools with Educate Together involved as patron, co-patron or partner¹, the organisation itself having become the fastest-growing school patron in the Republic of Ireland (Flynn, 2009). As of 2016, Educate Together schools employ over 1,200 school staff (including principals and teachers), serving over 22,000 pupils across Ireland (Educate Together, 2017). Additionally, 27% of Educate Together schools qualify for support under the DEIS² (Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools) support scheme for schools in areas of social disadvantage (Educate Together, 2017). The emergence of the Educate Together movement can be

¹ See: <http://www.educatetogether.ie/our-schools/second-level>

² DEIS programme for educational inclusion in Ireland:
[https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/)

seen as a significant step forward for educational provision in Ireland when one considers how politically, culturally and, as we shall see in the next section, ideologically different in the topography of the Irish educational landscape it has been in comparison over the years. The following discourses surrounding ethos, identity, patronage and cultural transmission are relevant to this study because of the deep connection that values and systems of belief have with our outlooks towards the educational of our society. By understanding this connection, a clearer picture of how and why the appearance of the Educate Together movement within Irish educational provision as significant can be seen.

Education in Ireland – Ideology, Identity and Ethos

Having outlined the rise of the Educate Together movement out of the Irish historical and cultural past and the core ways it as an organisation operates and conducts itself, what then are the ideological forces that have shaped and informed educational policy decisions and practices in Ireland in historical terms out of which such a movement was born? Dunne (2002) suggests that in the first decades of the Irish state “the question of citizenship was perhaps assumed to be largely answered by a combination of nationalism and Catholicism” (p.69). Similarly, Fitzgerald (2005) believes that the all-pervasive nature of the Catholic moral code most probably constrained the scope of other alternative moral codes making an entrance onto the scene. O’Sullivan (2005) offers an illuminating analysis of this situation by contrasting and comparing two educational paradigmatic views – the ‘theocentric’ and the ‘mercantile’. A theocentric paradigm is constructed from Christian principles and beliefs about human nature with a view of knowledge and truth as fixed and infallible. This, according to Drudy and Lynch (1993), meant that:

[T]he net effect of the pervasiveness of the ‘theocentric’ paradigm, especially during the first half of the twentieth century, provided a favourable context for the emergence of a consensual conception of the social order throughout Irish society (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: p.50).

A theocentric view such as this gives license to a society to be represented as a singular homogenous whole, with the knock-on effect that there is seen to be broad agreement regarding what constitutes the ‘public interest’ in education. This theocentric vision was positioned within Irish society when the new Irish state was formed and remained unchanged within Irish education for a further forty years. A ‘mercantile’ paradigm, however, refers to a vision of education where its civic remit correlates purely to the contribution it makes to national economic prosperity (Dunne, 2005). The educational dynamic in Ireland at the time can be seen to fit this description – educational reform became more urgent in the push towards industrial development, coinciding with the publication of the ‘*Investment in Education*’ report (Survey Team, 1966) which revealed a lack of investment in education in Ireland at that time and the decidedly disadvantageous position Ireland was in economically as a result. Moved to action by this report, the Irish government took more central control of the education system and, in its wake, education became “a matter for consumers of the system, such as pupils, parents, civic leaders and business interests, to decide” (O’Sullivan, 2005: p.112). In such a commercially orientated educational climate, Hargreaves (2003) believes teachers must courageously personify the countermeasure by dedicating themselves to “... building character, community, humanitarianism, and democracy in young people; to help them think and act above and beyond the seductions and demands of the knowledge economy” (p.60). As a result, there are some writers on the history of Irish education who refer to the ideas around ‘human capital theory’ (Gleeson, 2009; Lynch, 1992; O’Brien and Fathaigh, 2007) – “a theory which espouses that individuals can make value-added contributions to the

economy via their own education and training” (O'Brien and Fathaigh, 2007: p.594). Gleeson (2009) considers that ideas about education in Ireland became analogous with “the theme of education and the economy” (p.42) at the expense of “cultural, language, civic competence and moral development” (p.42). Ideology in Irish educational provision has therefore been seen as strongly influenced by what Dunne (2005) describes as a ‘technical rationality’ and serves to reflect a general outlook towards education that is concerned with market forces and the training of a skilled workforce (Dunne, 2005: p.68). Concern surrounding an economic undertone within Irish education was instantiated by the 1994 ‘*Report on the National Education Convention*’, which stated that the predominance of “economic and instrumentalist considerations in educational policy-making could have distorting effects, with deleterious consequences” (Coolahan, 1994: p.9).

The ‘mercantile’ paradigm in Irish education applies in particular to the second level school system where it may be argued discourses about educational matters are most concentrated. Debates about the choice of school subjects in second level and how they relate to future job prospects and academic pathways is a dominant feature within Irish educational circles, reflecting the prevalence of instrumentalist ideas throughout the provision of education in Ireland. However, there is a perceived lack of interconnectedness between Irish primary and second schools in terms of structure and pedagogy, with some arguing that primary schools are increasingly subjected to the same market-led forces as those so prevalent in secondary school provision. Irwin (2009) claims that ideologies that form the basis of the second level system have seeped into the Irish Primary School Revised Curriculum of 1999, suggesting that:

... the recent turn towards a more ‘performativity’ based model with regard to assessment (in the WSE or Whole School Evaluation), begs the question

as to how this more technicist model of assessment coheres with the more constructivist and radical approaches to learning, which are meant to be integral to the implementation of the curriculum itself (Irwin, 2009, p.NA).

Ideology plays a fundamental role in a state's education system by directing and shaping what is taught and what is to be valued in schools. Equating notions of 'Irishness' with Catholicism has been a highly successful way of giving legitimacy to a particular kind of doctrine. Waldron (2004) suggests that there is a symbolism associated with forming an identity of a given culture; this can become embedded in the collective consciousness, deep enough to remain under the critical radar and avoiding serious scrutiny or questioning. In everyday terms, this may be represented through the widespread acceptance of a Catholic-dominated educational provision in Ireland, particularly at the primary school level. Educational practices are reflective of how we view citizens in our societies and the type of society we aspire towards by engaging with issues relating to learning, the world of work and more conceptual notions like community and identity. It is vital then, when it comes to democracy and education in Ireland and its changing social landscape, that discussion around ideas of democracy, education, citizenship and child should feature prominently in discourses at a national level. According to Harris (2005), this is not the case in Ireland, where there is "limited reference to citizenship in general discourse in Ireland" and an "almost complete absence from most discussion and writings on... education" (Harris, 2005: p.5). The following themes of identity, patronage, cultural transmission and ethos, central to national discourses on primary school education in Ireland, are discussed below.

Identity:

Conceptions of national identity and the education system are intimately connected, schools being at the coalface of the shifting patterns of society and

the realities of social life. Devine (2005) believes that the formation of ‘Irish’ identity is located within the context of “the experience of colonisation” which in turn is “based on resistance to imposition from the ‘outside’” (Devine, 2005: p.51). Writing at a time still gripped by the unprecedented economic growth of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ in the mid-1990s, Devine (2005) argues that the formation of an identity in these “narrow and exclusionary terms” gives credence to a “highly racialised state policy on immigration” that “actively [seeks] migrants who fit in with the national ‘norm’ (white, and Catholic or Christian) (2005: p.51). This simultaneously creates “distinctions in the public mind between legitimate and deserving migrants (on work permits and visas) and those (mainly black or African) who seek access to the Celtic Tiger economy through asylum and refugee processes” (2005, p.51). Schools often find themselves central within this social context, with teachers in particular susceptible to the realities of social change, bringing with them prevailing discourses on immigration, ethnicity and national identity that are reflected and impacted by both their own values and those of the society in which they dwell, at any given time. Devine (2005) claims that the local and national settings in which these teachers work is “important as they marry national policy with local logics in the implementation of the curriculum in school” (2005: p.52):

... the role of the state, through its immigration and educational policies... fram[es] teacher discourse in inclusionary or exclusionary terms. Such policies, it is argued, are underpinned by a particular concept of Irish/national identity, which positions minority ethnic groups as ‘other’, with direct implications for both teacher perception of and practice with migrant children in schools (Devine, 2005: p.55).

According to Devine (2005), the (in)actions of the Irish state (the apex of power relations in Ireland) has a direct line to the creation of a climate which serves to either reinforce or challenge ethnic and other stereotypes. Stereotypes diminish and dilute perceptions of ‘other’, which are located in webs of

dynamism that themselves conceive and formulate social relationships and national identities – similar in many ways to how ideas of ‘Irish’ identity have been conceived in the first place. Devine’s (2005) views on education and how it impacts on issues of national identity are pertinent to discussion around education and democracy in Ireland given the sizeable changes to the Irish social demographic in recent years. By providing a lens through which to view the ideological undertones of these changes, the relations of power that preside over the Irish education system, namely the relationship between Church and state in Ireland, can be seen along with the extent of control over how educational provision is organized through its policies and practices of training teachers for these settings. What is presented here is how the Educate Together movement emerged from an ideological context that hitherto failed to accommodate changes to the dynamic of Irish society, specifically those with vested interests in attending schools such as parents and their children of school-going age.

Patronage:

The notion of patronage is a central issue for the Educate Together movement. This could be because of the significant place it is positioned within the Irish education system. Currently the vast majority (96%) of primary schools in Ireland are owned and under the patronage of religious denominations; approximately 90% of these schools are owned and under the patronage of the Catholic Church³. Since 2009 however, Educate Together has become the fastest growing school patron in Irish education (Flynn, 2009). The system of education in Ireland may seem difficult to understand for those unfamiliar with it, especially when faced with the fact that the Irish state funds

³ Irish Department of Education and Skills Diversity of Patronage:
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Diversity-of-Patronage/>

the vast majority of schools in Ireland yet retains very limited control over what happens inside them (Hyland and Bocking, 2015). The 1998 Education Act is the main piece of legislation that dictates education in Ireland. In it, patrons are granted considerable powers, having responsibility for determining and upholding the ethos of their school. Under such powers, a patron may:

- Establish a new school
- Set up its Board of Management
- Select the school's first Principal before it opens
- Directly appoint a Chairperson and up to two Board members
- Approve selection of other Board members
- Approve the appointment of all teaching staff
- Lay down the fundamental ethos base of the Board (Educate Together, 2012)

Patrons are involved in setting up a school and supporting the school's Board of Management in its day-to-day work; a school's Board can be removed by the patron and a patron is allowed to run a school directly, if desired. According to the Education Act 1998, besides from the Board of Management's responsibility to operate the school commensurate with the ethos as determined by the patron, thirty minutes of teaching per day is reserved exclusively for the patron's religious curriculum. In the denominational schools that constitute the majority of national schools in Ireland, the patron is usually the Bishop of the religion concerned. In an Educate Together school, the patron is a company limited by guarantee whose activities are regulated by its Memo and Articles,

and the Companies Acts, whose decisions are made at the general meetings of its members (Educate Together, 2012).

In the case of secondary schools, the issue of patronage is arguably less of a concern, due to the fact that students at second level are passed the age of preparation for the Holy Sacraments of Baptism, Communion, Confession and Confirmation (Donnelly, 2015). Several secondary schools have been established where Educate Together is either the sole school patron (such as Bremore Educate Together Secondary School and Hansfield Educate Together Secondary School in Co. Dublin); or joint patron where patronage is shared with the local council's Education and Training Boards (ETBs) (such as Kishoge Community College and Clonturk Community College in Co. Dublin (Educate Together, 2014)). The 1987 Education Act recognises ETBs as school patrons, albeit not as sole patrons of primary schools, with the Education and Training Boards Bill 2012 expanding the role of ETBs across Ireland (Darmody and Smyth, 2013).

Even though issues relating to the education of children are of importance to families in Ireland with children of school-going age, so established is the tradition of church or parish owned schools in Ireland that such issues only really arise when parents fail to secure a place for their child in a school of their choice, if it happens to be owned by a patron whose ethos does not coincide with theirs (Hyland, 2006). When compared to OECD countries, where private schools exist in parallel with those that are publicly owned and managed, according to Hyland (2006), in Ireland the vast majority of primary school-aged children attend privately owned publicly funded national schools.

Since 2008, due to parental demand for more schooling options and increased child population in some areas, the Department of Education developed a pilot programme, which has seen the development of eleven

Community National Schools around the country. In this model, ETBs act as patrons and accommodate all students regardless of religious affiliation, operating on a multi-denominational basis. Such schools are viewed as “child-centred, inclusive, multi-belief, State-supported schools offering high-quality primary education” (Moriarty, 2015: p.NA), aiming to increase parental choice and diversifying provision in local catchment areas and providing an “answer to the whole patronage issue” (O’Brien, 2016: p.NA). The religious education curriculum, to which pupils are under no obligation to subscribe to, is called ‘*Goodness Me Goodness You*’ and which will be taught in accordance to with the Dept. of Education requirement of thirty minutes per day to be spent teaching faith formation. However, there has been some controversy about how the Community National Schools’ programme of religious education will be delivered⁴. In order to provide separate faith formation classes, pupils are for some of the year divided into separate groups according to religious type: (1) Catholics, (2) Other Christians, (3) Muslims, (4) Hindus, Buddhists, Humanists, Atheists and Others. This has drawn criticism from some groups. Firstly, the segregation of students based on their religion flies in the face of the assertion that such schools aim to promote ‘inclusivity and diversity’ (Educate Together, 2016). Segregating young children for separate faith formation classes does little to advance interaction between children of different ethnicities. Secondly, it raises the issue of teachers being responsible for delivering religious instruction in a faith of which they have little detailed knowledge. Such an approach may even put a teacher in the position where he or she may have to reveal their religious identity within school hours thus infringing on employment equality legislation (Educate Together, 2016). And thirdly, there is the issue of transparency – the Catholic bishops insisted to the Department of

⁴ ‘Row over teaching religion in primary schools’ “experiment”:
<https://www.independent.ie/life/family/learning/row-over-teaching-of-religion-in-primary-schools-experiment-26700028.html>

Education that faith formation in these schools was a “minimum non-negotiable requirement” for their support of the new model, something which no other religious organisation sought and which some, such as the Church of Ireland, warned against (O’Brien, 2016: p.N/A).

Community National Schools are inclusive and multi-belief in theory, but in practice, it may be a different matter. They are still operating on a ‘pilot’ basis, which means they have no Boards of Management in place and as such are outside of the legal framework established for all national schools in Ireland. Unlike in Educate Together schools, faith formation in Community National Schools is conducted inside school hours, including sacramental preparation or other religious rites and/or milestones. Although in theory parents may choose for their children to ‘opt out’ of religious instruction at any stage, it is not known how Community National Schools will accommodate this and what provision will be made available to those who do. It would be indeed regrettable that the first significant steps towards more state involvement in Ireland’s educational infrastructure by such a pilot programme were to be met with disputes and challenges from the very beginning (Educate Together, 2016).

By law, Irish primary schools must teach the ‘integrated curriculum’, in which religion is integrated with other subjects throughout the school day. A religious ethos permeates the school culture, thus raising the question Grimmer (1987) sets forth regarding ‘learning about religion’ and ‘learning from religion’, especially in cases of minority or no faith (Honohan and Rougier 2011). Whereas ‘learning about religion’ provides opportunities to learn about a range of religious beliefs and rituals comparatively and factually, ‘learning from religion’ is concerned with religious indoctrination through the teaching of a particular religion or faith. In principle, it is possible for minority or no faith students in Ireland to ‘opt out’ of religious classes. In practice, however, many students are required to stay in the class *without taking part* due to a lack of

resources to cater for them (Smyth et al., 2010). Students of minority or no faiths having to stay in a majority ‘learning from religion’ class presents a serious problem in terms of these students be exposed to conflicting sets of values – one set from home, another from outside their home (Devine, 2009), thus setting side by side often contradictory ideas of acceptable forms of identity formation and display (Eriksen 2003). Despite the fact that parents have the right (on behalf of their children) to opt out of religion class and the associated sacramental preparation, children’s freedom to express their own religious identity may be constrained by the school they attend (Smyth, Lyons and Darmody, 2013). Alternatively, some have argued that pulling students out of religious education classes poses further challenges regarding ideas of ‘otherness’, the providing of an alternative, and may be discriminatory (Devine, 2005; 2009; Evans, 2008).

Cultural Transmission:

As we have seen, recent changes to the diversity and dynamic within Irish society has meant a re-positioning of ideas about national identity. Questions surrounding culture and belonging in terms of what constitutes an ‘Irish’ identity have become not just topical, but particularly relevant in recent years – there has been greater public scrutiny towards the Irish state and its various institutions, and how they deal with and engage with these discussions and ideas, especially in terms of the education system. The role of education as a mechanism for transmitting culture within the societal setting in which it operates and in turn being influenced by such a setting is a common aspect of sociological discourse. A state’s education system promotes both formally and informally the learning of its culture in order to create productive members of society. Ross (2003) believes that all education is based upon the beliefs and values of the society that it operates within, claiming that “[s]chools institutionalise culture: the schooling process and the curriculum define what

will be the culture of the next generation” (Ross, 2003: p.4). The religious dominance and market-led instrumentalism that have underpinned and defined Irish educational ideology referred to earlier in this chapter illuminate how such ideas of social and cultural reproduction occur. In terms of the delivery and deployment of curriculum and pedagogy, schools and teachers can be seen as agents not only of this social reproduction but also as agents of change to the reproduction of social and cultural values and beliefs. This is usually manifested in the Irish educational context through a school’s ethos.

Ethos:

Ethos plays a fundamental role within the Educate Together movement, not least because the issue of ethos has an important status in Irish primary education. Religious organisations have a legal entitlement to protect how their ethos functions through schools under their patronage, thus effectively making a school’s ethos sacrosanct and above state control. The Irish state enshrined the status of a school patron’s ethos in the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 1999, which enabled schools to prioritise (and discriminate) on the basis of ethos. The Education Act 1998 solidified the right for Irish primary schools to uphold their ethos.

Ethos in the Irish primary setting determines the pedagogical outlook of a school, acting as a mechanism for conferring a patron’s power. According to Donnelly (2000), the transmission of knowledge underlying a Catholic ethos takes a particular form, where there is an integration of faith, identity and cultural life in such a way that there is no demarcation between religious and secular life. This is achieved not only through religious instruction, but by taking control over the curriculum, both formal and informal, consciously and subconsciously (Pinar, 2004). Ethos at the subconscious level may be felt by parents through the ‘feeling’ or ‘atmosphere’ of a particular school and is

discussed in terms of the ‘core values’ and ‘characteristic spirit’ it represents in defining a school’s identity (Ireland, 1998). Ethos helps to disseminate and uphold the prevailing cultural conventions and hegemony, part of what some educationalists refer as the ‘hidden curriculum’. Philips (2003) tells us that “it is not only the explicit or manifest curriculum that has this political/ideological function; the hidden curriculum of schools also functions in this way” (Philips, 2003: p.163-164). Kelly (2004) suggests that learning isn’t merely comprised of the formal curriculum, but also of the hidden curriculum and what children experience through the complexity of social interaction. He suggests that in some cases:

... the values implicit in the arrangements made by schools for their pupils are quite clearly in the consciousness of teachers and planners, again especially when the planners are politicians, and are equally clearly accepted by them as part of what pupils should learn in school, even though they are not overtly recognized by the pupils themselves. In other words, those who design curricula deliberately plan the schools’ ‘expressive culture’ (Kelly, 2004: p.5).

This is significant in Irish educational contexts where a relation between ethos and expected behavior exists. How the Catholic Church has utilized the mechanisms of the school to promote and uphold its own particular values and ethos is noted by Devine (2005):

... the absolute control of church authorities, which regulate and govern school practice in line with their particular religious ethos, has been tightened by provisions within the Education Act (1998) (Devine, 2005: p.53).

The conventions which dictate particular behavior expected within a school setting are unavailable to outsiders, such as parents, as an explicit set of rules; they are, however, understood subliminally by the social interactions of

students and between students and their teachers, inferred from observations and experience of the values and moral code transmitted by the school. Thus, although the expected outcomes and aims of a school's ethos may not be explicitly available, the effect of that ethos certainly is. This then raises the question – if schools are promoting the values and ethos that comprise a unified 'Irish' identity at a national level, what outlet is there to reflect upon, give expression to or even confront these values at a local level, in classrooms? Writing during the peak of the 'Celtic Tiger' where there was a large increase in immigration to Ireland, Devine (2005) highlighted concerns about a system where "schools can be seen to operate within a contradictory legislative context, in which they are simultaneously required to protect their religious ethos and also respect the diversity in society at large" (Devine, 2005: p.53).

It was from this Irish social, cultural and historic educational context, where ideologies, notions of 'Irish' identity and state policy were aligned with religious homogeneity and cultural hegemony, conveyed through the apparatus of the school, from which the Educate Together movement arose.

Principles, Charter and Curriculum of the Educate Together Movement

The Educate Together movement claims to provide "schools that recognise the developing diversity of Irish life and the modern need for democratic management structures" and in particular that it "guarantees children and parents of all faiths and none equal respect in the operation and governing of education" (Educate Together, 2010: p.3). It emerged from a tradition that has been regarded as monocultural and monotheistic in its provision of education, and set out to meet a growing demand for educational settings that can cater for greater diversity and inclusion in Irish society (O'Sullivan, 2005). The Educate Together movement say that it establishes

schools which are founded on the principles of multi-denominationalism, co-educationalism, child-centeredness and democracy (Educate Together, 1999 [2004]). In 2015 however, a decision was made by the Board of Directors of Educate Together that it would no longer describe itself as a ‘multidenominational’ organisation, but would instead use the term ‘equality-based’. This was because throughout its history, the use of the term ‘multi-denominational’ by Educate Together has been “opposed by families, teachers and pupils who do not identify themselves in religious terms” (Educate Together, 2017a: p.6). A working group established by Educate Together found that “its use implicitly suggests a religious focus that has become confusing to parents, teachers and [the] general public” (2017a: p.6). This confusion is understandable given Hyland’s claim that Ireland is “one of the few countries in the western world where children have no choice but to be segregated by religion during their primary schooling” (1993: p.20).

Schools operated by the member associations of Educate Together are fully recognised by the Irish Department of Education and Skills and work under the same regulations and funding structures as other national schools in Ireland. As an Irish educational charity, the national representative organization of patron bodies and Boards of Management of Educate Together schools subscribe to the Educate Together Charter (1999 [2004]) where the emphasis has been on creating processes around values rather than a set of rules, static formulae or regulations (Rowe, 2003). Educate Together schools are promoted as encouraging a democratic ethos and a spirit of inclusivity, with the organisation itself declaring its commitment to doing this by establishing schools that are:

1. Equality-based – creating a school culture and practice in which the identity of every child is guaranteed active support.

2. Co-educational – proactive in promoting an approach to learning that encourages and supports the wide variety and range of talents among the children irrespective of gender.
3. Child-centred – that the needs of the children of the school strongly influence the decision-making process.
4. Democratically-run – active participation by parents in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teacher (Educate Together, 2017b: p.6-14).

Many of the principles that underpin Educate Together hark back to those of the Dalkey School Project in the 1970s, especially the components of Educate Together's ethical education curriculum entitled 'Learn Together'. This curriculum was created in an attempt to address issues (a cause of great public and cultural sensitivity then and now), which relate to the role and format of the teaching of religion in Irish primary schools. The Irish Department of Education and Skills Primary School Curriculum requires thirty minutes a day to be spent teaching faith formation in Irish primary schools – 'faith formation' being different to what might ordinarily be understood as education about religion/s. The Learn Together curriculum is taught in place of religious instruction programmes in Educate Together schools, which it describes as education which helps learners to develop critical awareness and understanding of moral decision-making, and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral issues and standards (Educate Together, 2011). There are four strands within the Learn Together curriculum: Moral and Spiritual Development, Justice and Equality, Belief Systems and Ethics and the Environment.

The belief systems element of the Learn Together curriculum addresses the diversity of religious outlooks currently found in Irish society. It does this

by teaching about the major world religions without an absolutist point of view and without favouring any one particular denomination. Schools celebrate a range of different festivals from these religions offering students the opportunity to develop religious literacy and an understanding and awareness of religious difference and cultural expression in an atmosphere of support and celebration. Schools attempt to integrate these celebrations into wider curricular areas and activities so that subjects related to the festivals can be further explored e.g. geography, history, art, drama etc. This places these events in broader cultural and social contexts, facilitating an understanding of the links between religious and cultural expression and the development of children's identities. This type of valuing of religious and cultural identity is also extended to humanist, agnostic and atheistic viewpoints with the same degree of respect, with these non-religious perspectives also represented within the Learn Together curriculum (Educate Together, 2011).

The approach taken by the Educate Together movement expresses a commitment to the recognition and celebration of diversity, most usually felt in terms of religious expression, in which it hopes that:

... no child is ever placed in a position in which they feel themselves an outsider in the school programme because of their family or individual identity.

... religious rights of all families [are addressed] without favour or discrimination.

Responsibility for religious formation of children is assumed to be that of the family and religious organisations, while the responsibility of the school is to provide a safe, caring and respectful environment for all children.

... children [will] have a strong and secure contact with their own identity and comfort in interaction with people of different faiths and persuasions.

The human rights of teachers and other workers in the school are addressed, as staff are never placed in a position in which they may be required to put forward as religious truth a viewpoint that they may not themselves hold (Educate Together, 2005: p.9).

For the purposes of this thesis, as a researcher I spent a significant amount of time learning about and understanding the conceptual ideas and values that constitute a social movement like Educate Together, which the various educational discourses dealt with earlier in this chapter bring together. Educate Together is a movement – it is values-driven, in that it does not have a vast corpus of documents that detail explicitly every aspect of its structure and outlook. As an organization, Educate Together believes the cultural and educational experience of children can be enhanced, preparing the child to live in and actively contribute to a diverse and tolerant society. The movement claims that this belief is solidified through its outlook on school management, governance and relationships between the school and the community in which it exists. The literature of Educate Together mentions how schools under the organisation's patronage are 'democratically-run', and where parental cooperation and involvement in all aspects of the schools' activities are deeply encouraged. This participation may be enacted in the following ways: involvement in classroom activities; participating in educational support such as paired reading, helping with and organizing extra-curricular activities, participating in artistic or musical events and linguistic or science and technology programmes organized by the school; supporting activities surrounding the delivery of the Learn Together curriculum; maintaining the school building and serving on Boards of Management of the school and other school committees (Educate Together, 2005). The active participation of parents helps to maintain the bond between the school and the local community, preserving the idea that the school is a place central to the life and activity of the community. Such an idea views people from different social, ethnic and cultural

backgrounds as valuable and active partners in the education process, representative of their community and thus enabling children from similar diverse backgrounds to have their identities equally valued and respected, all of which can be seen as important elements of the experience of education for democracy and democratic citizenship.

In the early stages of my research, I attributed the Educate Together organisation's particular take on democracy as a 'participatory' one – the view that active and enduring participation by citizens in public decision-making is a central tenet of democratic legitimacy. Aspects of participation and democracy can certainly be seen generally within the Educate Together movement – the principles that the organisation operates and is founded upon, and further expressed through the ethos and educational policies that each school strives to base its activities. Initially, I saw the movement's attempts at aligning social inclusion ideas necessarily with core values and ethos in mission statements of boards of management, and in the memos and articles of the limited company that carries out the responsibility of the patron of each school (Rowe, 2000). At ground level, such notions of social inclusion are illustrated within Educate Together schools through a "prioritisation of inclusion among staff" eating and socialising together, involving children in "making group decisions" such as student councils and encouraging children to "have a voice and support one another academically and socially" along with the encouragement of parental involvement through Intercultural Days and Book Fairs, as well as assisting teachers in specific subject areas such as maths and science (Lalor, 2013: p.5). An inclination towards inclusivity strikes familiar ground with a rejection of 'representation as delegation' in democratic terms (Floridia, 2013). This outlook regards the participation of active citizenry as merely antidotal to representative democracy due to the latter's tendency to reduce political involvement by individuals to voting for representatives in elections, where only successful

candidates of such elections have the authority to shape public policies. Delegation in this instance is a necessary by-product of representation in order for democracy to function feasibly in large nation states. Floridia (2013) claims that more radicalized exponents of participatory democracy, such as Barber (1984), propose that there tends to be little difference between citizens and voters in representative democracies:

... today, representative democracy guarantees efficiency and accountability, but at the cost of a reduction or even avoidance of the role that participation and active citizenship should play (Floridia, 2013: p.11).

There is a certain echo of this view with the Educate Together movement, although perhaps not in the political vein, seen particularly in its commitment to engaging meaningfully with parents in various aspects of the school experience. Lalor (2013) notes that this engagement includes parents sitting on Boards of Management, helping out with administrative tasks, acting as support for teachers in various specialised areas such as IT, and being appointed as parent representatives for classes. As my research unfolded, however, it became apparent that Educate Together's understanding of democracy was not reducible to a simple participatory interpretation, even though such ideas are echoed, and the deep sense of becoming, of unfixed and unprescribed democratic understandings began to emerge.

This participatory dimension does, however, tie in with another key aspect of Educate Together: that of child-centeredness. Child-centeredness is stated as one of four main commitments of Educate Together in their charter (2015), reiterated in its publication literature and imbued throughout its approaches to establishing and operating schools under its patronage in the form of a commitment that defines itself as an organisation. This is a broad understanding of child-centeredness, which they say encompasses more than simply an approach to teaching as perhaps found within child-centred

pedagogies, iterating that their stated commitments are not mere “mission statements” or “statements of intent”, but a real undertaking that reflects the binding obligations of their founding principles (Educate Together, 2017: p.5). They state that the “inclusion of this term in the Educate Together Charter as a founding principle means rather more than the definition of a ‘teaching philosophy’”, rather “[i]t defines another element of the policy formation of an Educate Together school”, obliging the Board of Management of a school to “take decisions based on the broad educational and developmental needs of the children over and above other external factors”:

This, for instance, would influence decisions on opening hours, school holidays, code of behaviour and allocation of funds. Many of these decisions involve striking a balance between conflicting obligations. Nevertheless, this aspect of Educate Together’s Charter ensures that the needs of the children of the school strongly influence the decision making process (Educate Together, 2017: p.12).

The expression “children of the school” is qualified by stating:

A school is a collective organization that strives to address the individual needs of every child. However, any school must balance these needs with the general interests of all the children (Educate Together, 2017: p.13).

The term ‘child-centeredness’ has many associations and usages – Chung and Walsh (2000) highlighted no less than forty meanings of the term, indicating that consensus of meaning is not within the bounds of possibility. Writing from a perspective of early childhood education, they did however, assert that “despite a range of meanings, there appears to be a common ideological understanding across most early childhood educators” (Chung and Walsh, 2000: p.216). Their historical analysis of the notion of child-centeredness revealed three major meanings over a period stretching from the 1930s to the 1980s – Fröbel’s notion of the child at the centre of his/her world;

the developmental educationalist notion of the child at the centre of schooling; and the progressive educationalist notion that children should direct their own activities. They maintain that underpinning the ideology of these three central meanings are different notions about children, learning and development, asserting that “[o]nce one begins to ask specific questions, for example, Of what is the child the centre?, meanings increase dramatically in an ever-shifting and conflicted discourse” (2000: p.229). Encapsulating these meanings however, Ryan’s (2005) description of child-centeredness offers a lucid and formal definition of the term:

In a child-centred education, the curriculum begins with the needs and interests of the child and responds to the unique characteristics of childhood. Teachers use their knowledge of how children develop to structure learning experiences that facilitate children’s learning through play and discovery. Children, therefore, are viewed as active learners who require freedom from adult authority to explore ideas independently and make sense of their world. (Ryan, 2005: p.99).

In light of the Educate Together focus on what the idea of child-centeredness means to them as an organisation, rather than a fixed definition of what child-centeredness is, for the purpose of this research what I take ‘child-centeredness’ to mean is the idea that adults and teachers do not just take a step back from the centre of educational operations, but are actively engaged in a dialogical relationship *led by children*. The various emphases on the relationship between school and community, the participation of parents in school life and an unprescribed, ongoing and open understanding of child-centeredness, all of which Educate Together clearly attempt to facilitate and encourage through its charter and curriculum, are, according to its literature, examples of the centrality of democracy in action to its principles. This is to enable the provision of meaningful learning experiences for children as citizens in a diverse and globalized environment. As my research unfolded, an

interrelationship emerged between the Educate Together open and unprescribed understanding of child-centeredness and P4C's interpretation of 'child' in P4C, the articulation of which is a major focal point of this study.

In addition to its commitment to an unfixed and unprescribed understanding of child-centeredness, Educate Together claims that schools under its patronage are co-educational. This is not simply in the sense where boys and girls are educated together in the same classroom, but rather in an attempt to address gender-based discrimination its curricular approach encourages the equal abilities of students in the classroom regardless of their gender. For instance, the lived school, the main research school in this study, took the step to change all male and female toilets to unisex toilets for both students and staff throughout the school. While these co-educational claims are indeed admirable within the context of Irish educational provision, they in themselves are not something that this study sets out to prove or disprove. They do, however, provide ballast in terms of the Educate Together movement's position as an alternative to what can be considered a firmly established denominational system of education, and one in which the commitment and vision for providing such an educational alternative for an increasingly diverse and globalized population is central to the entanglement of education and democracy in Ireland.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented how the Educate Together movement emerged from an Irish socio-cultural context where cultural identity was embalmed within the authoritative and denominational ideology of those in charge of the educational provision of the state. This chapter also investigated how the goal of transmitting this particular ideology for the purpose of maintaining economic, political, moral and cultural influence was maintained through the functioning

of the school system via both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. The context through which Educate Together emerged is far from objective or neutral in terms of the influence of the Catholic Church, which has acted to reproduce its ideology through the curriculum. This context is undemocratic, where criticality was absent and ideological positions remained largely uncontested, standing in opposition to the fostering and development of democratic values through education. The principles and core values of the Educate Together movement, however, can be seen to stand in opposition to this through the organisation's charter and the Learn Together curriculum. If, as Carr (1998) maintains, a contemporary democratic society's curriculum "reflects the definition of democracy which that society has accepted as legitimate and true" (p.324), the Irish educational context presented in this chapter reveals that educational provision before the emergence of Educate Together was not democratically inclined in either thought or in practice. The next chapter will examine the relationship between education and democracy in terms of P4C practice in Irish Educate Together schools.

CHAPTER TWO:

Conceptions of Education & Democracy

Introduction

This chapter explores concepts surrounding education and democracy through a discussion that focuses on the theoretical foundations of democratic education and educating for democracy. I present ideas relating to democracy as a way of life and the principles and practices involved in such an idea, in so far as they inform a democratic conception of education. The close relationship between education and democracy is elucidated by taking John Dewey's notion of democracy as a mode of associated living as a basis for discussion. Dewey's views on democracy as a form of community life that is constantly changing are considered in terms of education's interconnection with democracy, and reference is made to Dunne's notion of childhood and citizenship as a central theme within P4C and Educate Together. Dewey's ideas are evaluated with regard to Irish educational contexts before Fielding's views on relational democracy and democratic fellowship are explored in considering some of the practical concerns related to schools as sites for nurturing democratic principles. It is suggested that classrooms should not merely imitate democratic processes, but, through collaborative enquiry, they might function democratically, shifting emphasis to the organisational structure, relationships and the daily practices of the teachers in such schools. Such contexts enable the possibility of new and unfixed understandings of democracy to emerge within Irish democratic educational discourses.

Democracy, Ideals and Education: Dewey's Democracy as a Way of Life

In this thesis, I work with Dewey's vision of democracy as tied to community; for Dewey, a strong democracy is a process of community formation founded on communication (Burgh, 2014). The community aspect of participation in social interaction that underpins Dewey's idea of democracy I regard as a central feature of this study. Education is a powerful political tool, as leaders of authoritarian regimes know only too well, capable of being used to support democratic forms of society as well as to undermine them (Kelly, 1995). In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (2004 [1916]) considers "shared common interests" and "freer interaction between social groups" as criteria that frame the guiding ideals of any society with democratic intentions – these two traits "are precisely what characterise the democratically constituted society" (p.93). Both are entwined for Dewey – mutual interests produce broader and freer interactions amongst people, and relations based on equal terms can be expected through respecting mutual interests. As Dewey explains:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (Dewey: 2004 [1916]; p.93).

Dewey's view on what a democratic society entails, the intertwining of mutual interests and freedom of interaction, resonates with Kelly's (1995) assertion that democracy is not merely a political concept, but a moral and social one as well:

If democratic theory starts from the conviction that social living is natural for human beings, that ‘man’ is a social animal, and that what makes it natural is the opportunities it offers for collaboration in the interests of all, then it must follow that its prime purpose is to promote such collaboration and not merely protect the individual in the pursuit of his or her private ambitions. For it is the availability of others for collaborative enterprise, economic, artistic, cultural or social, which is the essence of that enrichment which a properly organised society can provide (Kelly, 1995: p.48).

If Dewey’s democracy is a way of life rather than just a form of government, that is, a pluralistic form of society where free and open collaboration and reciprocal relationships amongst people increase opportunities for participation in matters of interest for all people, then what part does education have to play within this understanding? As noted by Kelly (1995), education plays a “crucial role in the maintenance and development of any kind of political system” (p.102). Dewey makes it clear in *Democracy and Education* that a democratic way of life is dependent upon the relations people hold with each other and how prepared they are to engage with each other that embody democratic ideals. Dewey was aware that, as a form of community life, democracy is not stagnant or unmoving; it is constantly changing. In *Problems of Men* (1946), Dewey reiterates the “reciprocal relationship” between democracy and education, making the point that democracy itself is an “educational principle” and that “democracy cannot endure, much less develop, without education in that narrower sense in which we ordinarily think of it, the education that is given in the family, and especially as we think of it in the school” (p.37). *Democracy and Education* presents Dewey’s theory of education rather than practical methods for educational development, a philosophical understanding of education, whereby democracy is seen as a way of life. Through my participation and interaction with Educate Together teachers in this study, Dewey’s vision of democracy as a way of life gradually

emerged as an important feature of my research. By dialoguing and exchanging thoughts and ideas with research participants, Dewey's democracy as a way of life shaped and informed the notion of 'becoming democratic' at the heart of this thesis – an understanding of democracy as an ever changing project of engagement in cooperative social relationships and community, but one in which the child is central, something that Dewey was not principally concerned with. It was, however, through education that Dewey saw the change and growth essential to his idea of democracy as a way of life to find expression, both theoretically and practically.

In considering this reciprocal relationship between democracy and education, the question of how well our educational institutions are working to progress those aims arises. Historically, given the bloody birth of Irish democracy almost 100 years ago, the creation of stable democratic institutions has been somewhat of a success story, especially when we consider that in the early twentieth century the democratic model was not the predominant form of government in the West (Garvin, 1996). However, from a democratic ideal perspective, in which democracy is both the ends and the means of education, Dewey's belief in the development of a community consciousness with overarching elements of inclusion, diversity, transformation, and communication are conspicuous in their absence in the Irish context. Prager (1986) attributes the stability achieved by Irish institutions to the creation of a cultural consensus through forging a sense of identity that was initially disparate. In an effort to secure this cultural consensus, the cultural disparateness that existed in the early years of the founding of the state was absorbed into a more homogenous perspective of viewing Irish identity, inextricably linked to Catholicism (p.40). Ferriter (2012) characterises the Irish political and cultural arena being intellectually barren and its politicians lacking in vision – "There was not enough debate about policy, ideology or the

consequences of a ruthless centralisation and authoritarianism” (p.NA). Culturally speaking, such a culture of consensus and lack of debate and deliberation can be seen as contributory towards what Barber (2003) has described as ‘thin democracy’:

Oblivious to that essential human interdependency that underlies all political life thin democratic politics is at best a politics of static interest, never a politics of transformation; a politics of bargaining and exchange, never a politics of invention and creation; and a politics that conceives of women and men at their worst (in order to protect them from themselves), never at their potential best (to help them become better than they are) (Barber, 2003: p.24-25).

In Deweyan terms, such a situation shows no clear commitment to democratic ideals as conjoint living, rather it shows a narrow view of democracy that slots in seamlessly with a Catholic ideology and where the school in particular becomes the vessel for doctrine. Interestingly, as Hogan (1995) notes, such a nominally democratic situation in Irish education results in an “apologist” role for philosophy:

Where established custom and routine hold an abiding sway, philosophy is rarely given any task in the public arena other than supplying a justification for existing practices. Such a task tends to give to philosophy the office of apologist, as distinct from that of a questioner of fundamentals, or a self-critical monitor of practice. (Hogan, 1995: p.1)

Fielding (2016) offers an insightful way to view the organisational and dispositional aspects of education in and for democracy as a way of life. Fielding builds on Dewey’s insistence in *Democracy and Education* that “[a] democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: p.93) by highlighting in particular what he took this “mode of associated living”

to be about, that is, fellowship, or what Fielding refers to as ‘democratic fellowship’, pointing towards:

... a particular underpinning view of the relational nature of democracy and a companion education system that expresses and espouses its renewal and further development (Fielding, 2016: p.122).

Fielding’s view of democracy is relational, as opposed to merely representational, recognizing “the nexus of power and purpose in reconfiguring our aspirations and practices” (2016: p.122) through insisting on a link between the personal and the political, and between the purpose of democracy and the means by which it attempts to realise its aspirations. It is a way of living and learning together that centers on a commitment to freedom, equality and community. The last of these, community, is historically articulated as ‘fellowship’, something which Fielding considers to be not just the point of politics, but the precondition of its daily development and future flourishing, where:

... [it] is at once the precursor to and hope of democratic politics which is both its agent and an important site of its prefigurative enactment (2016: p.122).

Fielding draws this relational view from John Macmurray’s (1957) account of human flourishing, as the reciprocity between two modes of human interaction – functional relations (instrumental purposes to achieve certain tasks) and personal relations (typically friendships), where the personal is *through* the functional, and where “the value and significance of those encounters and activities lies in the degree to which they enable us to achieve wider, deeper human purposes” (2016: pp.123). This corresponds with the organizational structures that schools develop in order to fulfil their daily duties – “they too must enable those who teach and learn within them to achieve the deeper human purposes which it is education’s task to address and accomplish”

(2016: pp.123). If, as Fielding advocates, schools are “person-centred learning communities”, the functional is *for the sake* of the personal, and where the organisational arrangements and daily practices of the school should be judged by the degree to which they enhance and enable “creative human flourishing” (2016: p.123). In this way, organizational structure becomes important only insofar as it helps to realise and renew democratic intent, being ancillary to the democratic aspirations of the educational community enacting its lived realities. Fielding’s idea of relational democracy is recalled later in this thesis when the connection between Educate Together and P4C is explored and expanded.

If education is not serving the aims of a democratic way of life, a reordering of some kind is surely required. As Shook (2014) points out, Dewey believed that it makes little sense to define democracy and its aims as one exercise, whilst leaving “the definition and design of education to some other department of thought” (p.4). Kelly (1995) highlights the social institution we call education more than anywhere else where it is vital for democratic principles to pervade “in order that those principles [can] be clearly communicated to the rising generation of future citizens” (p.102). According to Dewey, democracy is far more than a form of government defined by elected representatives; it is comprised of moral ideals which, if the society that values such ideals is to truly be democratic, it must educate its citizens both in principle and in practice. These principles and practices are considered now.

Democratic Education: Community and Democratic Fellowship

Nowhere in Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* is there specific mention of the term ‘democratic education’. Shook (2014) says that education *for* democracy may not be the best place to begin, given that thinkers with divergent agendas for democracy start from that point and “go on to use education as a battleground to advance their different expectations for

citizenship” (p.3). There are many different interpretations of ‘democratic education’. What may be asserted when we consider participatory and deliberative democratic ideas side by side is the view that what a democratic education provides, or what participation in democratic politics gives rise to, is a democratic citizenry (Sabia, 2006). Barber (2003) suggests that the learning that takes place through some form of democratic participation is affective; participation in democratic politics or a collective self-governing process does not just promote on citizens’ behalf an understanding of democratic aspirations and ideals, but also moves citizens to embrace these ideals, becoming committed to the public interest:

“individuals [are] transformed... Their autonomy is preserved because their vision of their own freedom and interest has been enlarged to include others; and their obedience to the common force is rendered legitimate because their enlarged vision enables them to perceive in the common force the working of their own wills (Barber, 2003: p.232).

Hursh and Seneway (1998) highlight a consideration central to democratic education: that of democracy in the domain of schools themselves. Schools and classrooms are not politically neutral spaces but rather “places in which students learn what aspects of their lives they can democratically influence and how to act democratically” (1998: p.259). But what kind of democratic influence is to be understood here? Is it possible to enable genuine democracy in schools and classrooms that is more than merely ‘skin deep’? That is, can the democratic decisions children make be ever more than ‘tokenistic’? – presented to them already finalised after discussion that either did not involve them or was relegated to after-school activities and break time.

Fielding (2012) again offers a response by asserting a participatory democratic framework for ‘patterns of partnership’ between adults and children to work and interact together in specific school based environments. Such a

framework is enabled and supported by a relational view of democracy, which he describes as one that “insists on the link between the personal and the political, between democracy’s purposes and the means by which it seeks to realise its intentions” (p.54). As explored later in this thesis, Fielding’s espousal of ‘democratic fellowship’ entails a view of democracy and education where there is a realisation of democracy as a way of living and learning together, and where schools serve as examples of democracy in action, an idea that is drawn upon later in this thesis. Similarly, Hursh and Seneaway make the point that democracy should be “lived” rather than “practiced” in schools, where children learn how to think in ways that nurture good judgement in order to “exercise power and responsibility in a democratic society” (1998: p.259).

Essential to education within a democratic society is a commitment towards the maintenance and expansion of democracy itself (Jenlink, 2009). The “area of shared concerns, and the liberation of a greater diversity of personal capacities which characterize a democracy” (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: p.94) can only be achieved and retained through education. In fact, in Dewey’s eyes, the entire educational endeavour makes little sense unless it is viewed through the lens of a community consciousness:

The conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind (Dewey, 2005 [1916]: p.104).

Education, then, is crucial to Dewey’s democracy, since democracy is constantly moving towards creating more and more opportunities for freer experience in which we can all share and play a part:

An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment

of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: p.106).

Dewey's notion of a democratic society is one that is wholly diverse, consisting of various groups with differing interests all interacting and exchanging freely with one another. Within such a notion, citizens must be capable of understanding the active role of their own identity and reconciling the challenges and differences within their community, extending and enriching this democratic perspective. In the Irish context, there is some debate regarding whether a society characterised by cultural uniformity and a lack of open discourse is necessarily conducive to democracy. From the beginnings of the Irish state to the social partnership days of the Celtic Tiger era (1998-2008), although present in some form or other, challenges to establishment or any move towards the creation of a society based on social equality was notably unexceptional. According to Ó'Broin and Kirby (2009), one of the characteristics of a democracy is its ability to dissent from and contest the actions of the State, and by this measure the current state of civil society in Ireland suggests "a gap in our democracy" (p.9) resultant from an absence of both independent thinking and a readiness to criticise the organs of the State. What, then, might this imply in terms of the plurality within Irish society, a basic element of a democratic way of life that might be lived and shared amongst its citizenry? Waldron (2004) notes the extent to which "potentially equalising forces" within Irish education "are subverted by particularistic tendencies within the system", creating a tension between "comprehensive doctrines that are used as the arbiters of fundamental truths" and "the development and exercise of autonomy, between the rights of traditional

communities to recreate themselves and the needs of a pluralist democracy” (p.228):

The equalising or universalistic potential of state examinations, for example, is offset by the ability of the wealthy to buy access to extra educational knowledge in the form of private tuition and particularistic practices such as streaming within schools themselves. This particularism is an inevitable by-product of a system which is segmented along the sectional lines of class, ethnicity, gender and religion (Waldron, 2004: p.228).

I believe Ferriter’s (2012) critique of the modern Irish state as “morally bankrupt” (p.NA) with a “dysfunctional governing culture” (2014: p.NA) that placed a premium on “self-protecting elites” (2014: p.N/A) provides some justification for putting modern Irish democracy under a critical microscope. Michael D. Higgins, the current president of Ireland, but writing as a Labour Party minister in 1991, highlighted serious deficiencies in what should be a “model of Irish society” – the state’s education system (1991: p.5). He identified it as having been authoritarian, passive rather than active, conservative before critical, orientated towards the individual rather than the social, and isolated rather than dialectical (1991). Higgins’ point is that a democratic society and democratic education are mutually reliant on one another, something that echoes strongly with Dewey’s idea that democratic societies are concerned with the growth of all of its members and their participation therein. What this implies, I believe, is that Dewey’s understanding of democracy has not been realised in the Irish education system through its maintenance of exclusivity and obedience to the status quo. It shows that even today, Ireland has some way to go before democratic ideals are reflected in the Irish education system, and this is most certainly the case with Irish primary schools. Even a cursory reading of the Irish primary school National Curriculum (1971) supports this view. Whilst it signified a huge step

in the right direction in terms of pedagogical reform by introducing new subjects and advocating child-led approaches in the language of progressive educational philosophies, as discussed in Chapter One and a little later on in this chapter, it was also in effect used as a means to attain a particular ideological goal: that of religious indoctrination. Hyland (1996) observes that the 1971 curriculum can be viewed as capitulating a longer sequence of moves in Irish educational policy that aimed to legitimise the pervasion of the religious into every aspect of school life:

The State now formally recognised the denominational character of the national school system and made no provision for, nor even adverted to the rights of those children whose parents did not wish them to attend exclusively denominational schools (Hyland, 1996: p.5).

By comparison, the 1998 Primary School Curriculum built upon the principles and philosophy of the 1971 curriculum and on the deliberations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (RBPC, 1990). Within this curriculum is contained the requirement of thirty minutes each day designated for the teaching of faith formation (see Chapter One – Educate Together within an Irish Educational Context, p.41-43). Some commentators (Gleeson, 2010; Sugrue, 2004; Walsh, 2012) note a perceived historical absence of theoretical underpinnings regarding the purpose of education within primary and post-primary curricula.

At this point in the discussion, some treatment of the notion of citizenship is needed. Citizenship is multifarious, dense with differing understandings and interpretations of (among other things) democracy, education and childhood. However, citizenship signifies a sense of membership, an acceptance into a society with certain rights and values while bearing with it the responsibilities of belonging to such a society:

Building citizenship consciousness implies creating through education a sense of belonging to a community, wherever and whichever that is (Busoi, 2015: p.19)).

Lawy and Biesta focus their attention on a dual view of citizenship by drawing a distinction between “citizenship-as-achievement” and “citizenship-as-practice” (2006: p.42). Citizenship-as-achievement is based on the idea that citizenship is a status, a badge of honour that is achieved only after one has traversed a particular developmental and educational trajectory. However, advocates of citizenship-as-practice believe that this kind of approach excludes children and young people, opting instead to “make no distinction between citizens and *not-yet-citizens*”, to include everyone in society, even young people, to move through citizenship-as-practice (2006: pp.43). It is thought that by adopting a citizenship-as-practice view the processes in which young people learn the value of democratic citizenship can be experienced:

Such an inclusive and relational outlook would respect the claim to citizenship status of everyone in society, including children and young people, and recognise that it is the actual practices of citizenship (citizenship-as-practice) and the ways in which these practices transform over time that are educationally significant (Lawy and Biesta, 2006: p.48).

Rather than a destination to be reached after a pre-planned trajectory, Lawy and Biesta’s idea of citizenship involves one’s journey towards citizenship containing the same elements of democratic growth and ‘becoming’ through socially connected action that is a key feature of this study. This is explored in greater detail in Chapter Six where I interpret the findings of my analysis and build upon the idea of a new and different understanding of democracy as ‘becoming’ enabled through the partnership of P4C and Educate Together. It should be noted at this juncture, however, that Lawy and Biesta’s (2006) notion of citizenship-as-practice brings to the surface a central theme

within democracy as ‘becoming’ that connects P4C and Educate Together – that of child as citizen. In particular, Dunne’s (2006) notion of a child-friendly society gives expression to the binding idea of child central within P4C and Educate Together, and illustrates a picture of citizenship in parallel with childhood as achievements of modernity by drawing attention to the various historical discourses surrounding childhood:

The driving priority of modern adult society, through the medium of scientific-technical reason, has been to gain mastery and control – to be able to set predictable outcomes and increase the efficiency with which they are delivered (Dunne, 2006: p.12).

Dunne warns of models of childhood that conceive of ‘child’ as too much outside the context of relationships, and stresses speech, children's voice and adults’ close rapport with children to facilitate them in being “active protagonists in their own learning” in order to bring about a conception of citizenship where human interdependencies are acknowledged and brought into the open (2006: p.15). He believes that the society in which we live today is *not* child-friendly and that children figure in public policy largely by default as a problem to be contained so that “real” problems can be dealt with (2006: p.16). Following from Williams (2003), Dunne explains:

It is precisely by sharing together in significant speech, deliberation and action that we not only accept a common fate, trying to understand better the different historical strands from which it is woven, but also strive to shape this common fate for the future, thereby constituting ourselves as citizens (Dunne, 2006; p.16).

Dunne’s ideas highlight the need for greater insight into our understanding of child as citizen within broader notions of education and democracy if those understandings are seen through the lens of adult control and technical reason (2006). Dunne's emphasis on the importance of childhood

within a conception of citizenship reveals key concerns which educational efforts for democratic citizenship should be geared towards – dialogue, open discussion, action, community, human interdependencies – in short, the aiming towards a democratic dialogical child-led community. This is, as argued later in this thesis, a central theme within the connection between Educate Together’s unfixed and unprescribed understanding of child-centeredness (explored in Chapter Two) and P4C’s recognition of community with children (explored in Chapter Three), where children are viewed as “rational conversational partners who contribute to our understanding of ourselves as rational beings” (Johansson, 2011: p.360).

In nurturing democratic principles in students for citizenship, education becomes part of a wider social responsibility, where schools as institutions and teachers as practitioners undertake discourses of moral and ethical import. These discourses and dialogues work in preparing citizens, disseminated through classroom practices in conjoint communities that work together in their fostering of a strong democracy through education:

... democracy ... becomes a referent for understanding how public life organizes differences and what this means for the ways in which schools, teachers, and students define themselves as political subjects, as citizens who operate within particular configurations of power... the language of radical democracy provides the basis for educators not only to understand how differences are organized but also how the ground for such difference might be constructed within a political identity rooted in a respect for democratic public life (Giroux, 1988b cited in Giroux, 1997: p.153).

Democratic Education: Enquiring Classrooms

So what might such classroom practices entail? John Dewey, having been influenced by Charles Darwin’s 1859 ‘On the Origin of Species’, regarded human intelligence as evolving through a process of problematic experiences

and believed that schools and education in general should create the opportunity for pupils to engage in such a creative activity. Dewey believed education should contain the components of enquiry and strongly disapproved of education systems focusing purely on the transmission of knowledge without any credence to the process of how knowledge is constructed (Lipman, 2003). Dewey (1933) was convinced that education should be reconstructed along similar lines as scientific enquiry. Based on his theories of how human beings think about and solve problems, Dewey developed a pattern of reflective thinking as enquiry: 1) A problematic situation is experienced; 2) The problem is defined; 3) Various solutions to the problem are generated; 4) Each solution is considered and implications are compared and evaluated; 5) The most appropriate course of action is chosen and applied. Within traditional dominant approaches to education, pupil engagement often plays second fiddle to achieving grades in order to meet national curriculum expectations, to the detriment of pupil enjoyment of education (Galton, 2007). Dewey asserted that an education system that did not provide opportunities for students to enquire was innately undemocratic as it failed to help foster the skills and dispositions necessary to enable full participation in a democratic society, and the democratic process itself. Following Dewey, Matthew Lipman (2003) maintained that the methodology of P4C known as the Community of Philosophical Enquiry acts as “the social dimension of democracy in practice, for it both paves the way for the implementation of such practice and is emblematic of what such practice has the potential to become” (p.249). Similarly, Ann Margaret Sharp also believed community in P4C was of great significance – “Learning how to do philosophy well presupposes a community of shared experiences in which there are common procedures and commitment to these procedures” (1987, p.17). Dewey’s theory of enquiry and its intrinsic social dimension feature prominently in the methodology of this research, which is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Four.

According to Menthe (2013), developing the skills and approach of enquiry is foundational in education for democratic citizenship (p.73). Enquiry functions and thrives through the perspectives of others. In attempting to explain phenomena that have been observed, we must consider the possibility that there are a number of possible explanations. This is not just the case for scientific enquiries, it is also true for moral and personal enquiries too. In all cases dialogue and discussion is needed for a satisfactory resolution of the problem being enquired into – one person may offer an explanation and another person might suggest an alternative that did not occur to them. Explanations need to be justified and subject to each other's misgivings and criticisms in order for explanations to be tested, alternative perspectives and possibilities explored and previous explanations improved. This pertains equally to the classroom setting in developing open and enquiring minds to the problems that life presents. If equipping students with the social dispositions needed to support and maintain a democratic way of life is desired, the to-and-fro of reasoning with peers is an ideal means of achieving this end. If students are to become more measured in their thinking and explore alternative explanations, the fostering of dispositions for collaborative classroom enquiry seems an ideal way to fulfil the function of supporting a democratic way of life. In respect of educating for values, Matthew Lipman (2003), one of the leading figures in the development of Philosophy for Children, fervently believed that collaborative enquiry supersedes traditional instruction due to the fact that "cooperative learning stresses non-competitive discussion while collaborative enquiry stresses shared deliberation through a community of enquiry" (p.119).

If a collaborative enquiry approach to education is adopted, moving beyond an educational view reliant upon a traditional settled 'knowledge acquisition' classroom, the dynamic of the teacher-student relationship can be fundamentally changed. The teacher's role shifts from transmitting the contents

and results of previous enquiries contained in textbooks towards one where they facilitate students' learning to think about the subject being taught. When this shift occurs, it becomes clear that students communicating and discussing with each other is educationally desirable. This fundamental change could have deeper implications in terms of the moral and democratic positionality of the teacher. Change to how a teacher's role is viewed in Irish educational policy can again be pointed to in the creation of the 1971 National Curriculum for primary schools, which was the culmination of extensive consultation with teachers as the Irish education system responded to the needs of an increasingly diverse and modernising society (Devine, 2000). It introduced small group teaching for teachers and drew upon Dewey's ideas of the school as part of the local community and environment. However, although the 1971 National Curriculum did address innovations in teaching methodology and content, the *theoretical* foundation it was based upon did not do anything to change the view of the Irish school teacher as authoritarian and "a key figure in the cultivation of deference to authority figures, particularly religious" (O'Sullivan, 2005: p.443). In the Irish educational context then, Alt and Reingold's view of teachers' roles as moral and democratic leaders, as "nurturers of common moral democratic values" (2012: p.1), when seen through a democratic educational lens may be seen to be wanting:

A society sustains itself through continuous self-renewal, which takes place by means of educational growth of the immature members of the group. The educator's role in this process is a dominant one that emphasizes open moral discourse on values and norms. The progressive approach places social responsibility on the shoulders of the teacher in the process of educating for and through democratic values by raising personal interest in social norms and needs, with special regard to the individual's autonomy, reflection and judgment instead of externally imposing them upon him/her (Alt and Reingold, 2012: p.2).

Through collaborative enquiry, students can learn to talk and listen to those with whom they might not agree, becoming more and more accustomed to taking on board other people's interests, points of view and concerns when forming their judgements. Enquiring collaboratively broadens their thinking in deciding what course of action to take, enabling them to become more reasonable when dealing with differences of value and disagreements on action or conduct. By enquiring collaboratively with one another, students may be more prepared and willing to participate in community life. People unwilling or unable to think for themselves and reluctant to engage in active citizenship pose significant challenges to the building of a strong democracy. However, it is by no means unreasonable to assert that to develop social and intellectual dispositions in the generations to follow, the provision of collaborative classroom enquiry should feature in their education (Cam, 2009).

P4C has developed precisely as such a model of collaborative enquiry, hence its appeal to those who are interested broadly in citizenship and education for democracy (Haynes, 2008). Lipman (1988) understood thinking as a process of reflective enquiry, and conceived the classroom as a community of enquiry where the focus is on good thinking and its improvement. For him, philosophy provides an effective model for the educational process as a whole. On a basic level, what this means is an education that includes philosophical enquiry, and more specifically his Philosophy for Children programme, can make a fundamental and much needed contribution to the school curriculum. However, on a deeper level, Lipman had a much broader vision in which he saw philosophical enquiry as representative of a paradigm for "the education of the future as a form of life that has not yet been realized and as a kind of praxis" (1988: p.17). Similarly, Ann Margaret Sharp made it very clear that the community of enquiry was a means for children to discover the moral guidelines they wish to live by and the virtues they wish to exemplify in their

daily lives. For her, the community of enquiry constitutes a political enterprise – “To the extent that people have had the experience of shared dialogue, then they can have shared understanding, shared ideals, shared meanings. Such experiences are a precondition for the communal reflection and action essential for the existence of a strong democracy” (Sharp and Reed, 1992: p.171).

These broad visions relate directly to Cam’s (2006) belief that engaging in this type of collaborative enquiry encourages the social communication and mutual recognition of interests that Dewey identifies with a democratic way of life:

Such an engagement develops the social and intellectual dispositions and capacities needed for active citizenship, while liberating the powers of the individual. That is to say, in learning to think together in these ways, students acquire the forms of regard and the practices of social exchange that help to sustain an open society at the same time as they learn to think for themselves (Cam, 2006: p.8).

Thus, the community of enquiry, something which Tiffany (2009) has called a “democratic laboratory” (p.5), provides a model of democracy as enquiry, as well as being an educative process in and of itself. It is this aspect of enquiry, the connection between education and democracy, that Burgh (2003) implores us to pay urgent attention to. We ignore this connection at our peril, since it is the role of education to develop in students the habits, attitude and dispositions necessary for autonomous, active democratic citizenship (Burgh and Davey, 2004). The community of enquiry serves as an exemplar of deliberative democracy in action, where students learn about and build a capacity to make decisions on issues that concern and affect them as citizens in a democracy (Lipman, 2003). Burgh and Davey favour a model of democratic education over educating *for* democracy insofar as learning becomes a “student-centred activity where students exercise control together with teachers, parents

and the wider community in what and how they learn” (2004: p.328).

Classrooms should not merely imitate democratic processes but rather, in order to be effective, they must *function* democratically and have an impact on the wider democratic community, opening discourses on notions of the democratic school and what it means for a school to operate democratically as an expression of democratic values.

Democracy in Schools: Democratic Learning Communities

This discussion has proceeded from ideals of democracy through community and enquiring classrooms, bringing us firmly to the school gates. By this, I mean my attention is turned towards individual schools and their democratic practices and aspirations, along with notions of school leadership and community. Dewey is pivotal here in terms of discourses that aim to make the public school system a key part of a more participatory, democratic, humane society (Benson, Harkavy and Puckett, 2007). What is meant by a democratic school? The understanding I have come to is characterised as a ‘democratic learning community’, where democracy is both the end and as well as the means, the purpose and the practice, of education (Fielding and Moss, 2001). How this can be materialised is a matter of constant negotiation, administered democratically by those responsible for educational policy and most certainly by those working in the schools themselves.

Firstly, with regard to the democratic school itself, even though no two democratic schools may be alike, I assume a conventional conception of the school – as a public institution accommodated in a designated building to serve the educational needs of the local community:

Humans are social animals. We are meant to interact with others. It is the nature of these interactions that defines community. Democratic communities acknowledge the equal right of all members to participate. In

short, democratic communities in schools are made up of citizens-in-fact: teachers, students, staff, and all other participants in the schools (Lambert, 2012: p.131).

One essential feature that all democratic schools need to instantiate, however, is empowering students to participate in issues of school governance and in the development and implementation of policies and practices related to teaching. Teachers and school staff should share with students the administration of school affairs in a democratic school, as doing so helps foster the development of democratic virtues and encourage understanding of democratic ideals and practices. But how may we be sure of this? Advocates of radical or progressive education, following Dewey, connect progressive education with democratic education, which, according to Nicholls (1989), involves “forms of cooperative learning that emphasize the involvement of students in negotiation of tasks, methods, and solutions to problems” (p.168). The expectation here is that this kind of approach to education will help students develop autonomous ways of thinking and enhance mental, social and cooperative faculties. Nicholls suggests that, “student choice, cooperative learning, and participation in decisions about curriculum are all consistent with the democratic emphasis of progressive education” (1999: p.170). However, he also points out that, even though personal competence and the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions is encouraged in this type of environment, there is also an emphasis on students learning how to cooperate with others, compromising where there is disparity, and the cultivation of responsibility for and valuing of collective and collaborative projects and activities.

It seems, therefore, that the transformation of the school from a hierarchical organisation to one with much more of a democratic association goes some way towards the cultivation of democratic values, on the part of both

students and teachers and other school staff. This would entail individual students, teachers, educational administrators and school leaders having political agency, participating in both the management of a democratic association and as citizens managing a public institution. In terms of the students, such moves towards a democratization of the school would mean replacing the idea of children as citizens-in-waiting, (not yet valued fully as citizens, as potential citizens and potential persons), with one where they are already citizens-in-fact. To do so is "...to recognize [that] children as citizens move our schools from day cares and assembly lines to laboratories of democratic action" (Lambert, 2009: p.125).

With this in mind, it is possible to see how the values inherent in the democratic school may stretch further beyond the school gates in the cultivation of a democratic citizenry within the local community, which it serves as a place of democratic practice. By integrating itself into the community, the democratic school can provide a connection within the community that encourages participation in school governance, providing and creating resources and knowledge to the community and affecting civic and political action. In Deweyan terms then, it might be suggested that the democratic school contains elements similar to those within the community school movement. Comprising a plurality of different endeavours and undertakings, the work of Rennie (1985) with British community primary schools focused on the integration of school and local community, the idea being that the community is a partner in the governance of the school and the educational programmes of the students, and the school is a partner in the community as a centre for meeting and facilitating the resolution of community needs and issues:

Schools are one of the last institutions all communities have in common...

A community school does not exist as an island within a community; rather

it is more of an oasis, where services and support are offered that benefit the broadly defined community (Richardson, 2009: p.17-19).

Similarly, Fielding and Moss (2001) point toward the Italian network of municipal early years schools in Reggio Emilia as exemplifying a particularly beneficial consequence of integrating democratic schools in the community in this way, that of moving from “public accountability of the school” towards “public sharing responsibility of the school” (p.84). In this case, thirty-four schools have created a network between them where they coordinate with their local communities and the city as a whole to collaborate on a variety of different educational endeavours and projects. Teaching practices are discussed and developed by teachers, students, parents, and school and civic administrators and leaders, and educational projects (such as music workshops) are extended into the community and community inhabitants and groups (such as the local opera house) spread into the school to participate in the learning and regulation. Although the emphases between the democratic school and the community school differ, the above examples show that it is possible to see how the school might come to be a thoroughly democratic centre of community learning by weaving together school and community through educational practices.

There are several different and varied examples of this type of knitting together of democracy, community and education seen through the pioneering work of individuals such as Alex Bloom’s establishment of St. George-in-the-East school in London (Fielding 2012), the writings of John Macmurray (Fielding, 2013), and the development of village colleges in Cambridgeshire by Henry Morris (Haynes, 2013). Through providing a site of community meetings, health and family services, adult and vocational education and training, workshops and presentations, and a space for civic and community groups to meet, activities such as these involve the coordination of different actors in and around the school. Students, families, school administrators and

leaders, community and business members, and civic groups can encourage and support community connections and civic action, and progress as a self-governing community populated and determined by democratic citizens acting to deal with and resolve practical problems.

The question we then must ask is why is this form of school association and educational approach the exception, rather than the rule? And further, what obstacles or challenges exist that hinder the creation and support for democratic schools? Taking issue with the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act educational policy in American public schools and the negative cognitive and, most importantly here, anti-democratic repercussions of an increased priority given to standardized testing, Horn (2009) suggests “[h]ow democracy is defined reflects the specific values, beliefs, and knowledge of the group that is culturally and politically dominant” (p.98). What this essentially means is a nominally democratic nation will reproduce a nominally democratic society through its public education policies and practices. Therefore, in answer to the question above, it seems as though a defective or inadequate democracy would be unable to produce (or perhaps even welcome) a democratic school. The circumstances behind such a situation are examined now.

Democratic Schools: an Exception to the Norm

As seen from Horn (2009), public schools reflect the conceptions of democracy within which they are rooted and confined. The social, political, cultural and economic forces that influence and regulate the policies and practices of education ensure that schools exist in a democracy marked “by an undemocratic economy, by undemocratic communications and media industries, by undemocratic cultural institutions, and by a form of representative government many see as serving special interests and itself more than the broad needs of the people” (Starratt, 2001: p.341). Liberal and conservative values call

for increased accountability in schools, prompting more centralized control over public schools and more standardization of the curriculum and teaching practices. It can be argued that this increased control over schools works to lessen the grip of public interest and support for them, adding to the more individualistic or isolated understanding of citizenship that is taught in schools:

Schools are seen in a very contradictory way. They are seen to be key elements of the causes of our problems. Thus radically changing them (through an odd combination of privatization and competition and stronger central control) is imperative. “Good” schools are those and only those that hew to a corporate agenda and a corporate image. “Bad” schools are all the rest. And the people who work in them need a good dose of competition and tighter control. But through it all, what is evident is the loss of commitment to collective responsibility. It’s almost as if schooling itself as a collective process is an enemy, a source of pollution that threatens the purity of market solutions and possessive individualism (Apple, 2013: p.4).

Educational administration and leadership remains undemocratic, being based upon autocratic and technocratic values that permeate social thought and action, to the point that “modern leadership practices advance an epidemic plaguing many... school cultures: that of traditionalistic, bureaucratic, positivistic, autocratic pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning, and leading” (Bourgouis, 2009: p.361). All this serves to strengthen the idea that moves toward democratic schooling efforts are very difficult indeed.

Michael Apple, who is primarily concerned with the North American context, has been working to combat a conservative direction taken by a worldwide political discourse, maintaining that at the centre of such discourse is a transference of the “true realm of freedom” to the market and not, as before, to democratic politics (Teodoro, 2007: p.88). Apple (2006) highlights four groups who pose a threat to democratic schools despite their differing principles and aims. Neoliberals, who view issues of public interest suspiciously and believe

that market relationships can solve social issues, including that of education; Neoconservatives, who advocate a return to more traditional standards of discipline and performance. A third group Apple describes as “authoritarian populists” who have support from fundamentalist Christian groups and are deeply suspicious of public schools as secular institutions. The fourth group comprises what Apple considers to be a new professional middle class, who, through assuming a technocratic rationality and a professional ideology, adopt an approach to public education that advocates accountability and efficient management. This has culminated in a newly created “common sense” of education and social policy, a “conservative modernisation” that is “having a powerful impact on debates over policy and practice in education and in the larger social arena” (Apple, 2006: p.49). As a consequence of this, we can see on one hand, an increase in state regulatory control over education while local schools and local governments have less autonomy; on the other hand there is a lack of public support and interest in public education and an expansion of privatised education. If we take the example of a small school with a certain level of autonomy, essential features that Fielding and Moss (2001) affiliate with democratic schools and radical education, we can see just how highly the odds are stacked against the democratic school. By promoting such a school, Fielding and Moss set forth the unique blend of difficulties that may be faced by small local community schools in a nominally democratic society where inequality already exists in the form of residential segregation through class and race:

The more unequal and segregated the society, the more difficult, if not impossible, it becomes to have schools with a ‘socially mixed’ intake, especially in larger urban areas. The basic problem of income inequality and residential segregation is exacerbated not only by a marketised public education, but by a school system that includes a significant private sector reliant on parents able to pay high fees and that serves the interests of those

at the top of the social and economic hierarchy, and whose purpose (all too successfully achieved) is to reproduce privilege and inequality (Fielding and Moss, 2001: p.130).

What of the utopian ideal of the democratic school? Fielding and Moss widen the chasm between the dominant market discourse and the democratic school even further by stressing that, “current education and schooling are not accidental. They are socially reproduced by powerful discourses and institutions, which education and schooling in turn help to reproduce. Education cannot be seen in isolation from wider social and economic forces, and the former cannot change substantially without the latter” (Fielding and Moss, 2001: p.166). By looking towards the potentiality of a “transformation toward a radical education and common school”, they espouse a cautious optimism amongst the constraint and restriction of the “dominant but failed and dysfunctional discourse about education and the school” (Fielding and Moss, 2001: p.3). While acknowledgement of the deep restrictions that inhibit movement toward the democratic school show there is much to be pessimistic about, withdrawal and a reluctance to engage in the difficult and utopian work of the democratic school is surely equally disheartening. Although very much the exception rather than the rule, and most certainly in the minority, against such odds democratic schools *do* exist. If social institutions and prevailing practices really do shape and define culture and society, then it means that education, as a site of cultural change, is also possible. This is not to say that education becomes the most pivotal dial from which all social transformation is exercised, but merely that education and public schools bear considerable significance in terms of cultural reproduction and, as a result, the potential for change. This places the emphasis on public schools as opposed to other domains of struggle and confrontation as the realm within which democratic change is possible.

Similarly, another observation about what hope there might be for increased democracy and democratic schools relates to the seemingly paradoxical idea that through global political policies and practices that work to dislodge and undermine democratic change, there emerges a political landscape that “is now more favourable to participatory ideals than in the recent past” (Warren, 2002: p.679). Opportunities for democratic activity have materialized through the fog of increased polarity within societies, globalization and economic complexity, such that “increasing disaffection from formal political institutions seems to be paralleled by increasing attention toward other ways and means of getting collective things done” (Warren, 2002: p.682). Lefrançois and Ethier (2010) also see reasons to be hopeful through the possibility of narrowing the gap between the democratic reality of current political societies and the democratic ideal, the seeds of which are contained within the former, including in public schools:

... democratic education in the schools is imperfect, but perfectible, like democracy itself. Such an education can materialize through pedagogical activities that, even with defects, permit the active integration of students into the management of the normative and institutional structure of the classroom and of the school establishment (Lefrançois and Ethier, 2010: p.272).

I believe this optimism regarding existing traditions and emerging practices points discussion and analysis about democratic education towards democratic schools themselves, in their various modes and configurations, and specifically the classrooms and teachers within them. There is critical scope within every tradition of practice, and prevailing democratic and pedagogical practices are not excluded from this. Although democratic schools stand in stark contrast to the ideological landscape within which they are situated, the idea that citizens can be free and equal, and that the school can prepare children for

democratic citizenship, endures as a source of inspiration and legacy for those who venerate a stronger and more robust democracy than that which we benefit from today. For those individuals who wish to advance a democratic way of life and the immanent values such a form of living would encapsulate, it can be assured that transforming public schools will be a long and tiresome endeavour, but one where the site of struggle is well chosen. To encounter these ideas in their fullness necessitates an 'exquisite contextuality' within the overlapping domains of education and democracy, and culminating at the site of the democratic school. This exquisite contextuality, meant here in terms of educational research, must be able to sense the unarticulated, the hidden, the new and different ways of understanding and conceiving democratic principles, organisational structures and practices.

As Fielding (2012) notes, in "naming democracy as a form of partnership that is pre-eminently desirable and incrementally achievable in schools" (through a patterns of partnership framework between adults and young people), serious attention must also be given to "the view of democracy on which such advocacy rests" (p.54). Fielding's relational view of democracy means relationships are seen as a key component in the power dynamic of the intergenerational practices in schools and those developed in society. Through the functional advice of the patterns of partnership framework and an understanding of democratic fellowship, it is hoped that dominant perspectives on democracy will be challenged and a "practical means towards the realisation of democracy as a way of living and learning together and of schools as themselves examples of democracy in action" (Fielding, 2012: p.58) can be provided.

Fielding's work leads the discussion about democracy and education beyond the gates of the democratic school to the very heart of a teacher's practice to advance democratic values in their classroom with the children under

their care. Here, within the exquisiteness of context, is revealed how democracy in action may exist and how it is conceived. How a teacher views and understands their practice offers a powerful and compelling illumination of the values and pedagogies that help us identify the conceptions of democracy a society is committed to, linking “our pasts and our capacity to understand the present and shape the future in ways that our values demand and our hopes suggest” (Fielding, 2012: p.58). Dunne (2003), in arguing that the profession of teaching be seen as a practice “intimately bound up with the goods of other practices” (p.355), considers teaching to be a practice in a neo-Aristotelian sense, since the act of teaching resides in caring for students that is realised in “helping them become whatever particular practices can enable them to become” (p.368). In this way, if democratic education is believed to be important for the ways in which we live and learn together, the teacher practicing and conceiving of democracy within the space of the democratic school offers an intriguing insight, an ‘exquisite contextuality’ essential for articulating the nature and development of democratic perspectives and ways of living.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interrelated concepts involved in education and democracy by drawing on Dewey’s views on democracy as an associated mode of living and community life, underpinning this chapter’s discussion of the close interconnection between education and democracy. Concepts central to discussion on education and democracy were explored with reference to the Irish educational context, where it was asserted that the view of a teacher’s role as a democratic leader seen from a progressive educational approach is conspicuous in its absence. The discussion moved from the general to the specific, from the ideal of democracy to the democratic school, drawing upon

Fielding's ideas on relational democracy and democratic fellowship. By focusing attention on the individual democratic school, it is suggested that teachers as practitioners undertake discourses of moral and ethical import that work to prepare citizens for democratic life. The view of education presented in this chapter is not one upon which all social transformation hinges, but rather one in which public schools are seen as important sites of cultural reproduction and the potential for change. I have argued that the features of democratic education, such as collaborative enquiry in classrooms, community and citizens-in-practice, necessitate an 'exquisite contextuality' from which to articulate and understand democracy as a way of life.

I have also argued that classrooms should not merely imitate democratic processes but rather function democratically, with an emphasis on the practices and processes at the heart of the democratic ideals of individual schools, the wider outlook on education and democracy of the teachers who work there, and the practices they engage with within their classrooms. This emphasis on practice is the focus of the next chapter of this thesis (Chapter Three), where I shall explore the literature landscape around the practice of P4C. Having referenced Dunne's idea of a child-friendly society informing the central theme of 'child' within Educate Together and P4C, I would like to make the suggestion here that a child-friendly society is one that can arguably be considered more democratic in nature. As will be explored in the next chapter, children have contributed significantly to ideas about what philosophy is and what it can be, thus being in a position to offer unique insight and perspectives on how we envision a democratic society. It is partly a realisation and understanding of this that vitalises and inspires the teachers that participated in this study.

CHAPTER THREE:

Exploring the Landscape: Democratic Education & Philosophy for/with Children

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the idea of educating for democracy within the context of the Irish educational system and the cultural atmosphere in which Educate Together exists. It was suggested that the principles and structure of Educate Together provide democratic opportunities with regard to citizenship and education in individual schools and the actions of teachers in their classrooms. This chapter outlines the landscape of literature on P4C in terms of how it relates to ideas about education and democracy, and in particular those that concern notions of ‘child’. Of particular importance for this study is research that emphasises the importance of the perspective of teachers who engage in P4C practice, in terms of their wider outlooks on education and democratic society. Some of the global development of P4C, as affirmed by several UNESCO studies, is discussed, with an eye towards describing national contexts of the practice in Ireland. The central aspects of P4C, especially those relating to ‘child’, are explored, presenting a view of P4C as a means of creating the possibility of positioning children as co-enquirers. Two studies in particular within the Irish educational context are considered as supportive of research into P4C in Irish schools and the importance of teacher perspectives of critically reflective practice for research on education and democracy. P4C is presented as a deeply challenging and risky pedagogical activity, one that contests dominant paradigms of education in a democratic society, and a crucial component of my

study as I seek to understand democratic education through the perspectives of teachers who engage in such a practice.

Philosophy in Schools: Some Global Developments

Since its foundation in 1946, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has actively supported the development of a culture of philosophy internationally as a means of improving and reinforcing a respect for human rights and peace amongst people. The Paris Declaration of Philosophy (1995) states:

All individuals everywhere should be entitled to engage in the free pursuit of philosophy in all its forms and all places where it may be practiced; Philosophy teaching should be maintained or expanded where it exists, introduced where it does not yet exist, and designated explicitly as 'philosophy' (UNESCO, 1995: p.15).

In 1998, an international meeting of experts at UNESCO made a number of specific recommendations regarding the teaching of philosophy to children that included: "the collation and dissemination of information on existing philosophical activities for children in different countries; the development of philosophical activities with primary school children; and the promotion of philosophy training for primary teachers" (UNESCO, 1998: p.29). The 2007 'Philosophy: A School of Freedom' was published by UNESCO in response to explicit requests from other member states. It articulated the "present state of teaching of philosophy in the world" (UNESCO, 2007: p.xi) by compiling contributions from 126 countries, aiming towards "constitut[ing] a reference tool for policies concerning the teaching of philosophy" (UNESCO, 2007: p.xii). This was the first study of its kind to focus on the teaching of philosophy to pre-school and primary school aged children, the purpose of which was to "incite and invite questioning without imprisoning it" (UNESCO, 2007, p.xvii),

thus liberating and opening “the young minds called to become the thinkers and players of the world of tomorrow” (UNESCO, 2007, p.xi).

UNESCO’s ‘Philosophy: A School of Freedom’ study declared that the values at the heart of practicing P4C have substantial “educational and political significance” (2007: p.15). It suggests that the growing enthusiasm for philosophy and the interest in teaching it to children that has emerged in recent years is reflective of global concerns educators have about how we educate pupils for 21st century life, and the recognition of dialogue as central for “stimulating the intellectual and moral development of pupils from a very young age” (2007: p.3). It also contained a tacit acknowledgement that dominant educational paradigms are inadequate for both of these things. The findings of the UNESCO study resonate with growing public support for teaching philosophy to children in Ireland, which may also reflect dissatisfaction with the current educational paradigm in which schools are operating. The recognition of dialogue as central to philosophical thinking with children features prominently in the methodology of this research, discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. This idea underpinned my participation and involvement in 2015 in co-founding Philosophy Ireland⁵, a voluntary network of teachers, academics and philosophical enthusiasts aiming to promote and support engagement in philosophy and philosophical enquiry in Irish schools and wider Irish society. Philosophy Ireland originated through the mutual coming together of a group in dialogue and their desire to engage with one another as philosophical and/or P4C practitioners. Having attended a conference about philosophy in Irish schools, I waited around afterwards and began joining other conversations and talking with others in attendance – not just conference

⁵ Philosophy Ireland is a voluntary organisation, co-founded by the researcher, comprising academics, schoolteachers and community stakeholders concerned with the introduction of Philosophy into Irish schools and society: <http://philosophyireland.ie/>

speakers but with some of the audience members that had stayed around after the conference as well. We talked about the fact that although there has been small groupings of individuated practice of philosophy in Irish schools in different parts of the country, it would be great to have some kind of network where philosophical practitioners could engage and talk with each other. I remained in contact with several attendees via email, exchanging ideas and dialoguing about P4C and philosophy in Irish schools. As a result of these exchanges, it was decided that a group would be formed that could support philosophy in schools and act as a network for encouraging greater philosophical engagement across all aspects of Irish society. Since then, Philosophy Ireland meetings have taken place regularly where issues for all members are discussed and voted upon democratically. Connections have been made and collaborative projects have been developed with other creative community groups, mainly those concerned with children and young adults, involving creative exploration and projects, and philosophical questioning. The slogan chosen to represent Philosophy Ireland's attitude towards philosophy and community is: "Philosophy is for everyone". Philosophy Ireland has been campaigning for philosophy in Irish schools, providing P4C training for Irish teachers, assisting in national curricular developments for philosophy in Irish schools, organising public opportunities for philosophical engagement and attending receptions and launches of events and initiatives aimed at developing philosophy participation, most notably at the residence of the President of Ireland. Speaking in November 2016 at a reception held at Áras an Uachtaráin⁶ for Philosophy Ireland to mark World Philosophy Day, President Higgins proclaimed that "An exposure to philosophy is vital if we truly want our young

⁶ Áras an Uachtaráin is the official residence and principal workplace of the President of Ireland: <https://president.ie/en/>

people to acquire the capacities they need in preparing for their journey into the world” (2016).

P4C in Ireland stretches back to 1989 where encouraging children to think philosophically was first introduced into Irish primary schools by Dr. Joseph Dunne and Dr. Philomena Donnelly from St. Patrick's College of Education, Dublin, both of whom “followed on the work of Lipman, Matthews, Vygotsky and others that promoted the use of dialogue in the classroom as a means of understanding” (Donnelly, 2001: p.278). Donnelly told me that “... there have been small islands of PwC [P4C] within the primary school system since 1989 and this has been present with the tacit support of the DES [Department of Education and Skills]” (Donnelly, 2018: p.N/A). She also told me that an ‘Association of Teachers of Philosophy for Children’ in Ireland was formed in the late 1990s and which produced two volumes of a Philosophy for Children journal called ‘Arista’ in 1998 and 2002. There is no account of P4C being practiced in Educate Together schools back then, which may arguably be because of Educate Together’s precarious position within Irish educational provision as a whole at that time, having only formally launched its Charter in 1990 (see Chapter Two – Educate Together within an Irish Educational Context, p.45-49).

The 2007 UNESCO study made sure to highlight the fact that even though the term ‘P4C’ is used to describe a broad range of practices concerned with the teaching of philosophy to young people, its origins are based on certain principles, methods and materials representative of a western, democratic cultural viewpoint. It justifiably objected to imposing a singular “cultural model upon peoples, countries or cultures...” (2007: p.16), recommending instead that teaching children philosophy should be continually adapted in order to suit distinct cultural and political contexts, forming a kind of composite – a rich variety of approaches that reflect and celebrate plurality and diversity around

the world. Research cases from twenty two countries featured within the 2007 UNESCO study illustrate this richness. Justice cannot be done here to the huge diversity within the spectrum of approaches to philosophy for children (P4C) spread around the globe. However an indicator of such exists in Gregory, Haynes and Murriss' 2016 'Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children' and García, Duthie and Robles' 2018 'Current proposals in Philosophy for Children', a publication that resulted from the ICPIC (International Conference on Philosophical Inquiry with Children) Biannual Conference in Madrid, Spain, in June 2017. A small selection from this vast collection have included, for example, educators in the UK adapting Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp's original P4C programme to align with national cultural contexts; in other cases, proponents in countries like Germany and Japan have collaborated to develop a P4C programme that draws on the philosophical ideas of western and eastern philosophers native to both countries; and enthusiasts in France have developed a variety of approaches to teaching philosophy to school children, including Lipman and Sharp's original P4C method, a 'democratic-philosophical' stream, the Socratic method of Oscar Brenifier and Jacques Lévine's 'psychological *cogito*' method (UNESCO, 2007: p.34). In the majority of these cases it was found that discussion, taken to be "an interactional process that takes place within a group, is led by a teacher, and features verbal exchanges related to a precise subject" (UNESCO, 2007: p.10), was the prevailing pedagogical method used, at least at primary school level, regardless of differences in culture and sociopolitical circumstances. It should be acknowledged, however, that this is not the full picture of the different approaches to P4C practice around the globe and that practices involving philosophical thinking with children are vastly rich and multifarious (Gregory, Haynes and Murriss, 2016).

In February 2011, a high level regional meeting on the teaching of philosophy in Europe and North America took place, organised by UNESCO and the Italian National Commission for UNESCO. The purpose behind this meeting was to “...draw up recommendations for the benefit of the actors concerned, notably the public bodies responsible for school and university education, with the aim of either introducing philosophy into the curriculum or improving teaching where this discipline is already on offer” (UNESCO, 2011: p.6). In terms of democratic approaches to education, some of the key recommendations made to member states of the region were that educational innovation should: “[p]romote research, pilot experiences and practices in the field of philosophy with children in pre-school and primary education, and, when possible, institutionalize this approach in the education system.” They should also “[f]oster academic and pedagogical debates on the specific nature of and relation between philosophy class, civic or moral education, and religious education, so as to draw maximum benefits from each of these” (UNESCO, 2011: p.82). With regard to philosophy teachers and practitioners (as well as civil society actors) exploring new approaches to philosophy teaching, it was recommended that member states should:

Develop suitable courses and philosophical fora that foster public awareness on the new social and ethical challenges for humanity while making reference to classical texts and authors belonging to various philosophical corpora;

Foster critical exploration of the different philosophy schools belonging to Western traditions and to other cultural and intellectual heritages;

Work with teachers of other disciplines in order to experiment an interdisciplinary approach to philosophy teaching, for instance through introducing philosophical analysis and specifically philosophical topics into existing subject matters in primary and secondary schools;

Promote different approaches in teaching philosophy, including in a framework of progressivity in school curricula, in order to instill a view of philosophy teaching as a continuous process from primary school to higher education;

Encourage the universities, philosophy departments, research centres on philosophy and human sciences to overcome disciplinary compartmentalization and to promote more interdisciplinarity on the basis of solid disciplinary knowledge, with a view to reaching out to the wider public; (UNESCO, 2011: p.84).

In Ireland, after undertaking P4C training with SAPERE, a charity that promotes P4C practice in the UK, I have worked with others to support and contribute to teacher training and public debates on philosophy in schools. This was done through my involvement with Philosophy Ireland, which was in the main focused on teachers introducing philosophical discussion to their normal classroom practice. This reflects UNESCO's recommendation that teacher training and public debates should "introduce philosophy courses and training on conducting communities of philosophical enquiry and philosophically directed discussions [...] in teacher training in general, with the support of philosophy departments, with the aim of making philosophical enquiry a principle of primary and secondary education in general, and of developing future teachers' critical thinking" (UNESCO, 2011: pp.82). Support for P4C exists among several organisations, including the International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC), the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), the European Foundation for the Advancement of Doing Philosophy with Children (SOPHIA), the North American Association for Communities of Inquiry (NAACI), and the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA). However, this support does not stretch to P4C's institutionalization as an educational convention on school curricula, and P4C is often "found to operate

on the periphery of national educational systems (with the exception of Australia)” (UNESCO 2007: p.17).

According to Haynes (2018), in recent times the idea of P4C constituting a ‘social movement’ has surfaced in P4C circles. Morrow & Torres (2007) define a social movement as “a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity” (p.86). I would similarly contend that the growing interest and enthusiasm surrounding the teaching of philosophy to children in Ireland, and globally, regardless of official sanction from national curricula, constitutes a developing social movement. The idea of social movements within an Educate Together and P4C context is examined in greater detail later on in Chapter Six of this thesis. Carnoy and Levin (1985) consider social movements to be central in applying pressure for educational reform when such pressure is geared towards the field of educational policy-making. In Ireland, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment consulted on and developed a Junior Cycle short course in philosophy for optional inclusion in Irish secondary schools available from September 2017 for first to third year classes. In November 2017, the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins launched the Irish Young Philosopher Award⁷. This is an annual competition celebrating primary and secondary students’ thinking aimed at encouraging ethical and reflexive thinking about all forms of knowledge and the issues that are central to contemporary social life. It was formed in response to increased calls for greater reflection and debate about the type of skills needed by citizens in a society that is changing rapidly (President of Ireland, 2018). However, although these endorsements are undoubtedly a step in the right direction in terms of philosophical thinking in Irish schools,

⁷ The Irish Young Philosopher Award: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/think-before-you-fire-out-messages-online-says-president-1.3501658>

they are in general still marginal and tokenistic. The fact that the head of state has been highly vocal in advocating for the inclusion of philosophy in the national curriculum acts as somewhat of a paradox in terms of signifying both the level of interest in philosophy in schools in Ireland and, contrastingly, how loud the voices have to be in order to be heard and listened to. For philosophical enquiry to become “a principle of primary and secondary education” (UNESCO, 2011: p.82), P4C must feature in discourses on national educational policies that address curricular aims and pedagogical approaches. Members of Philosophy Ireland continue to try and exert influence on educational policy discourse as academics, professionals and civic agents by promoting, advocating and conducting discourses related to philosophy in Irish schools and wider Irish society. This means, to greater or lesser degrees, being involved in lobbying members of the Seanad⁸, publishing articles in newspapers and journals, organizing and facilitating public philosophy events and engaging in philosophical enquiry with various and sometimes marginalized groups in Irish society.

In comparison to the UK, The Society for Advancing of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflective Education (SAPERE) is an educational charity founded in 1992 that promotes P4C practice in the UK by training teachers and others interested in the methodology of philosophical enquiry. SAPERE has also worked to get official recognition for P4C by English national curricula policy-makers. There is no such charitable organization in Ireland and the teachers that participated in this study had a very limited knowledge of SAPERE – one participant had come across the SAPERE website through searching for ideas on P4C stimuli and session ideas online. As mentioned earlier, as part of this research study I completed a two-day SAPERE Level 1 Foundation Course in

⁸ Seanad Éireann is the Irish Senate, the upper house of the Oireachtas (the Irish legislature): <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/>

London in June 2015 in order to learn what was involved in practicing P4C in the wake of my research and my personal practice of P4C with children in one Educate Together school. The value of experiencing a community of enquiry, the methodology of P4C, as an enquirer as opposed to a facilitator, contributed greatly to my own personal practice of P4C in this school, what I came to refer to as the ‘lived’ school.

P4C: Theoretical Foundations

Throughout this study, the term ‘P4C’ is used to refer to the wide variety of approaches to engaging in philosophical thinking for/with children, reflected by the phrase ‘family resemblances’. This is the phrase adopted by the Routledge International Handbook for Philosophy for Children, and for the 18th International Conference of the International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC) in Madrid, Spain in 2017 entitled ‘Philosophical Inquiry with Children Coming of Age: Family Resemblances’. The Philosophy for Children Programme first emerged in the United States in 1972 from the work of Professor Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) in Montclair University, New Jersey. Several writers consider Lipman and Sharp’s educational paradigm to originate from three separate sources, namely social constructivist theory, the Socratic method and philosophical pragmatism (Fisher, 2003; Gregory, 2008; Lipman, 2003; Mercer and Littleton, 2007; SAPERE 2015; Wells 1999). These are explored now.

Social Constructivist Theory:

Social constructivist theory influences the theory and practice of P4C. Epistemologically, both social constructivism and P4C are intersubjective – knowledge is seen as fallible, a meaning making process mediated through

language and social interaction located in a culturally specified context (Daniel, 2007). Because of this, critical dialogue in P4C encourages active participation, interdependence, multiple perspectives and tolerance of complexity and uncertainty. Vygotsky founded social constructivism in his attempts to develop a theory of human development to shed light into what it means to be human and how the human condition can be improved (Wells, 1999). Vygotsky believed that: 1). Language is an important cultural tool for learning, being embedded in specific historical and cultural contexts affecting learning; 2). Learning is an innate social activity mediated through using cultural tools to construe meaning between people (inter-mental) firstly and then within individuals (intra-psychological); and 3). Learning takes place in a zone between actual and potential development, called the ‘zone of proximal development’, and mediated by experienced members of the community (Vygotsky, 1978).

There is a heavy emphasis on collaborative participation and constructing meaning through dialogue with others within P4C’s assumptions and practice, in order to develop the metacognition for multidimensional thinking and higher cognitive functioning (Fisher, 2003). Learning is regarded as an active process of making meaning where members of an enquiry are sources for increasing knowledge and understanding. This kind of shared and mutually participatory learning calls for a reshaping of education as more than simply ‘employability’, where the teacher is the ultimate authority of knowledge, towards molding a view of education as the “outcome of participation in a teacher-guided community of enquiry” (Lipman, 2003: p.18), requiring sufficient time and space in order to do so.

The Socratic Method:

Socrates (469–399 BC) is very often associated with critical and independent thinking. He championed the idea of an ‘examined life’ that enabled individuals to question ‘received’ beliefs, escaping from prejudicial, egocentric and impulsive habits of thought (UNESCO, 2007). Socrates’ search for truth is both a moral and rational enterprise facilitated by following an inductive procedure of resolute and rigorous questioning, aiding movement from specific cases in point (e.g. an instance of justice) to provisional generalisations (Lipman, 2003; Fisher, 2003).

For Socrates, asking and seeking questions is fundamental to teaching. In P4C sessions, practitioners use Socratic questioning to encourage children “to seek clarification, probe reasons and evidence, explore alternative views, test implications and consequences and ask questions about the question” (Fisher, 2003: p.154-155), instilling and refining habits of multidimensional thinking. Engaging in Socratic questioning presents certain problems when one considers the fact that open questioning by teachers is historically sparse and culturally entrenched (Galton, 2007). Only one participant in this study had a formal qualification in philosophy and Socratic questioning was neither mentioned during interview nor observed specifically during session observations. Participants did, however, recognize the importance of questioning and exploring, and encouraging questions with the pupils in their class. Socrates as a figure remains significant when it comes to notions of the aims of education and dialogical methods of teaching. The only records we have of his views were written by others, not having ever committed his own ideas to writing and preferring one-to-one dialogue, professing his own ignorance and showing a willingness to expose his own thinking to the same process of self-examination as he did with others (Haynes, 2014).

Philosophical Pragmatism:

The ideas of classical pragmatists like Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey can be clearly traced within the practice of P4C. Philosophical pragmatism means subscription to William James' idea of an inclination "towards concreteness and adequacy, facts, actions and power", leading to "the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretence of finality in truth" (James, 1998: p.31 cited in Malachowski, 2013: p.1). Pragmatic philosophy rejects Platonic notions of absolute truth, espousing instead an understanding of knowledge as a useful tool for "making our way in the world" (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992: p.69). Fallibilism considers human perception and enquiry methods susceptible to error and is characteristic of a pragmatic view of knowledge. C. S. Peirce believed that scientific knowledge is tentative as the "product of human contrivance embedded in practical judgements of a community of fallible enquirers" (Burgh, Field and Freakley, 2006: p.33).

Peirce also maintained that in order to progress towards a more comprehensive understanding, participation in a community of self-corrective enquiry was a necessity (Gregory, 2002). Similarly, P4C assumes knowledge claims not as representations of an objectively ideal world, but rather as a basis for action where the purpose of participation and consensus of a disciplined community of self-corrective enquiry "is all that can be meant by the ideal of objectivity" (Gregory, 2006: p.117). Accordingly, fallibilism and self-correction are key aspects of the principles and practice of P4C. Dominant contemporary approaches that "impose an instrumental role on education" (Dunne, 2005: p.148), regard knowledge as fixed, unwavering and indisputable, while notions of fallibility and self-correction are held as irrelevant and inconsequential. These aspects, of knowledge as provisional and fallible, are fundamental to new and different understandings of democracy revealed through the partnership of P4C and Educate Together in this study. This partnership, and particularly the

resulting idea of democracy as ongoing and emergent through dialogue and practice, is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Six of this thesis.

P4C: ‘Child’ and Childhood

Ideas surrounding notions of ‘child’ and childhood are central within P4C (Gregory and Granger, 2012; Haynes, 2007a, 2014; Haynes and Murriss, 2012; Kennedy, 1999; Kohan, 2002; Kohan and Kennedy, 2016; Matthews, 1980), with Kohan (2014) asserting that “the encounter of childhood and philosophy calls for a rebirth of each, and of their relationship to the other” (p.xi). Haynes (2008) suggests that at the heart of dialogue with children lie “adults’ responses to what children claim to know and the ways in which power and authority are deployed in classrooms” (p.14). Matthews (1980) drew attention to children’s capacity for philosophical reasoning and sense of wonder, advancing the area of the philosophy of childhood and actively encouraging the “need to rethink the child” (p.172). The landscape of viewpoints on childhood is wide and varied, with contributions from P4C literature adding both theoretical and practical philosophical *and* childhood perspectives to this landscape, such as, for example, children’s rights and capacities to philosophise, the idea of ‘child as philosopher’ and ‘philosopher as child’.

P4C presents itself as a transformative philosophy of childhood and education, paving the way for deconstruction of conceptions of adultism and childism, comprising fundamental reconfigurations of adult-child relationships and school ethics (Haynes, 2014). Adults have to be ready to view knowledge as contestable, trusting children’s perplexity expressed in their questions when we think we already have the answer, and where “[a]uthentic listening in the classroom implies adopting a position of fallibility and challenging the assumption that being older means one is necessarily wiser” (Haynes, 2014: p.473). Haynes and Murriss (2012) suggest that there are ethical implications to

adults choosing to join in more or less reciprocal dialogue with children, facing the challenge of seeing P4C as valuable in its own right and mutually edifying, as opposed to the shaping and forming of suitably skilled citizens-to-be. The experience of philosophising with children compels adults to increasingly question the conceptual foundations of distinctions and ethical relations between adults and children, requiring further exploration into and the drawing upon of a broad range of philosophical traditions (Haynes, 2014). This points towards P4C's 'affective' quality, noted by some writers (Lancaster-Thomas, 2017; Duchos and Fletcher, 2011) most often in terms of affective learning – education that focuses on the emotional and social capacity of children. The 'affective' quality of P4C in this study, however, considers the P4C practitioner and their being part of an enquiring community, something that Ann Margaret Sharp identified as “a particular type of intentionality that shows itself especially in our relationship with other persons” (2004, p.11). P4C's affective dimension causes a sort of disruption that suspends or displaces “certain normative impositions of social value attributed to specific groups, people or behaviours” (Pires, 2017: p.22). In this thesis, P4C's affectiveness relates to the desire and actuality of effecting positive change and growth, particularly in terms of interpersonal connections (Lancaster-Thomas, 2017).

‘Child as philosopher’ and children as ‘natural philosophers’ (Murriss, 2001) are both ideas that involve the nature of philosophy changing, and becoming different when children are involved in philosophising, becoming transformed when previously excluded voices are included. According to Gregory and Granger (2012), “[p]roponents of the figure of the Philosopher as Child see the practice of philosophy, ideally, as involving a turn toward childhood” (p.1). They highlight characteristic traits of childhood, such as impulsiveness, somatic awareness and cultural naïveté as things that might alter and correct instilled personal and cultural habits of adulthood that become

hardened and inflexible over time (Gregory and Granger, 2012). These traits are associated almost exclusively with childhood, while traits such as rationality, constraint and erudition are those associated mostly with adulthood (Haynes, 2014). Engaging in P4C means the possibility of entering into a space of philosophical dialogue with children, where the notion of ‘child’ as a philosophical disposition can be drawn upon by all, adults and children alike.

The community of philosophical enquiry (explored in detail in the next section) provides a pedagogical framework that positions children, and the adult facilitator, as co-enquirers, enabled through intergenerational dialogue. This type of pedagogy is very much at odds with the dominant metaphor of teaching as ‘delivery’, which emphasizes instruction and positions children as receivers, their minds as containers to be filled, by offering an alternative to censorship and disrespect for children’s authority to speak of what they know. Kennedy (2006) believes that through the language of dialogical education, what has been termed ‘school’ becomes, rather than a locus of reproduction, an adult-child collective – a locus for re-shaping adult habit and self-understanding through dialogue with the impulse-life of the child, just as much a child’s impulse-life is shaped into habits associated with adulthood:

It is a place of mutual reconstruction through the forms of life of a community whose main preoccupation is the intergenerational reconstruction, through project and inquiry, of philosophy, art, science, and politics. Its overarching social goal is the formation of, not rationality but reason—in the sense that rationality is objectifying, monological, and impositional, while reason is based on reciprocity, intersubjectivity, dialogue, and negotiation (Kennedy, 2006: p.22).

Kennedy (1999) claims that children’s historical marginalization in the Western construct of rationality positions them, like women and other natives, as “privileged strangers” to the tradition (p.339), enabled by the community of

philosophical enquiry to enter it through dialogue and narrative, where “[l]ike all voices from the margins, theirs are prophetic in regards to the tradition, which, as it opens itself to hear them, is transformed (p.339):

The value of the marginalized voice is to open a space for deconstruction and critical reconstruction of the tradition. What distinguished Philosophy for Children from other such attempts is that in CPI [Community of Philosophical Inquiry], philosophy becomes an oral event-structure rather than a literate text-structure – it re-enters time. In the language event of CPI, the conceptual “problems” of the tradition – truth, knowledge, justice, mind, and so on – are reinvented/rediscovered in the process of communal dialogical discourse. This creates a space for reconstruction of the tradition in its lived, contemporaneous form – as it exists *now* in human thought, culture and social life (Kennedy, 1999: p.357).

By including, encountering and listening authentically to children in communal philosophical dialogue, P4C creates possibilities for departing from excessive preoccupations with measurement in education and moving towards educational conversations with children that reflect their uniqueness and lived experiences. P4C’s emphasis on the centrality of ‘child’ within philosophical and educational discourses is a fundamental aspect of this study through its deep connection with the notion of ‘child-centeredness’ at the heart of Educate Together. The thread of ‘child’ that binds Educate Together and P4C together emerged from teachers engaging in P4C practice and listening to children in an Educate Together context, explored in greater detail in Chapter Six of this thesis.

The Practice of P4C

Collaborative thinking and dialogue lie at the heart of the practice of P4C. Burgh, Field and Freakley (2006) make the point that collaborative thinking within a community of philosophical enquiry incorporates much more than

shared cognitive understanding – it encompasses values and dispositions as well as mental acts:

To think collaboratively is to think actively together, to care about what is important, to value the process of communal enquiry within a democratic environment, to find and explore alternative views and solutions, to follow the enquiry where it leads, and to envision new possibilities and make judgements accordingly (Burgh, Field and Freakley, 2006: p.112).

Collaborative thinking and enquiry feature, albeit marginally, within the final report from the (Irish) National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's 'Primary Developments – Consultation on Curriculum Structure and Time, Final Report' (2018). However, within a performance oriented classroom culture that prioritises learning outcomes, competencies, targets, levels, testing and individual achievement, both teachers and pupils alike might regard collaborative approaches to learning as unnecessary and irrelevant to their needs.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, P4C in Ireland began in 1989 through the work of Dr. Joseph Dunne and Dr. Philomena Donnelly. According to Donnelly (2001), the practice of P4C in Ireland has only been partially inspired by Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme rather than modelled explicitly on it (Donnelly, 2001). Teachers and teacher educators who engage in the practice in Ireland have used various terms such as 'philosophy', 'philosophy for/with children' and 'Thinking Time' rather than the more globalised term 'P4C' to refer to their practice. In this study, 'Thinking Time' was the term used by several teachers and staff to describe their practice within the lived school and some of the other Educate Together schools I visited during the research process. The emphasis in Thinking Time is on dialogue as an art form (Donnelly, 2002), where an alert and aware type of listening, rather than

merely hearing and waiting one's turn to speak, paves the way for an unfolding drama (Donnelly, 2015).

Haynes (2008) also emphasizes teachers' listening and responding to children's ideas, believing that teachers who ask and seek questions and encourage critical thinking in their pupils are engaging in a practice that is fundamental to the concept of a rounded education in a democratic society:

Teaching pupils to think for themselves, to question received knowledge and to learn through challenge, scrutiny and deliberation of ideas has been at the very heart of a view of education that espouses creativity, invention and progress (Haynes, 2008: p.35).

There are several writers on P4C who consider the practice in terms of democratic education (Baroso, 2000; Cam, 2008; Haynes, 2005; Israeloff, and Lone, 2013; Juuso, 2007; Sharp, 1987). Lipman considered the quality of democracy to be dependent upon the education provided by society, while at the same time believing that education acquires its meaning through democracy (Juuso, 2007). Lipman maintained if this is how we are to understand democracy, then its mandate for education must be composed of thinking, where children are treated as active and creative citizens rather than passively listening subjects, and their tendency for enquiry and questioning is respected (Juuso, 2007). Lipman takes much inspiration from Dewey, where philosophical thinking in education serves both a methodological as well as a pedagogical function, that is, through both its form and content, "constitutes the conditions of democracy as well as characteristics typical of the democratic process" (Juuso, 2007: p.69). This was encapsulated by Dewey when he declared that "philosophy is the theory of education as a deliberately conducted practice" (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: p.357). Lipman refers to the intellectual depth and richness philosophy provides regarding ideas fundamental to democracy,

such as freedom, truth, virtue etc. as well as the dialogical nature and process of philosophy contributing to democratic deliberation and decision-making.

The Community of Enquiry

As pupils become used to the democratic process and learn the language of philosophical enquiry, they also start to assume a more active role in the enquiry, taking responsibility, leading and regulating the enquiry as it unfolds (Fisher, 2003). The open-ended nature of philosophical enquiry requires a space in which contestable viewpoints and critical judgements can be encountered *democratically*. The context for sharing and listening to these views and judgements is what Lipman called the ‘community of enquiry’ (spelled ‘inquiry’ in American English), a term coined by C. S. Peirce used to refer to the ideal process of scientific research. Fisher (1996) maintains that:

A community of enquiry can be said to have been achieved when any group of people act co-operatively in the search for understanding. Not only does each member benefit from the ideas and experience of everyone else, each person feels a valued part of the *whole* community (Fisher, 1996: p.40).

Within a community of enquiry, there is respect for others as people as well as a concern to offer one’s ideas up for scrutiny. Splitter and Sharp (1995) suggest that the sense of community has a dual aspect – a rational structure for effective thinking and shared habits, and a moral structure of mutual respect and shared democratic values. Lipman proposed the bringing together of the community of enquiry, as envisioned by Dewey, with philosophy as a powerful pedagogical process (Echeverria and Hannam, 2013). Lipman saw that a guided, open-structured dialogical speech community, the ‘community of philosophical enquiry’, is the most appropriate way to practice the philosophical curriculum he created for students, something that Kennedy (2012) sees as “not

just a pedagogical device, but rather the projection of an ideal speech community dedicated to a normative form of democratic practice” (p.37).

Splitter and Sharp (1995) mention how a community of enquiry matures along with the changing role of the teacher. This is indicated by a shift in the dynamic of the discussion, where the teacher or practitioner takes a step back, in terms of their facilitation of the enquiry, and there is increased input and interaction from the pupils as they use the vocabulary of enquiry, facilitating and critically evaluating their own and one another’s positions alongside the progress of the community. Daniel’s (2007) study of primary school children engaged in P4C characterizes ways in which, over time and through experience, classroom interaction undergoes a qualitative change from anecdotal or monological discussion towards critical dialogue. The enquiry procedure becomes more flexible and the role of the practitioner or facilitator becomes one of co-enquirer rather than one of just providing prompts for the enquiry (Splitter and Sharp, 1995). Ann Margaret Sharp was particularly interested in the idea of the P4C community of enquiry functioning as an educational means of “furthering the sense of community that is a pre-condition for actively participating in a democratic society”, believing that “[s]uch a community cultivates skills of dialogue, questioning, reflective inquiry and good judgement” (Sharp, 1991: p31).

Criticisms of P4C:

P4C is not a unified tradition and has a mixed identity. It is a very diverse and evolving field with many different dialogical, political, social and even epistemological theories and conceptions. Much of the criticism directed towards P4C makes the assumption that it is a singular tradition when, in reality, it is a rich manifold seeking to explore the unique opportunities to reflect on the aims and purposes of both philosophy and education. Some of this

criticism comes from what Dunne (2006) considers to be a technical or instrumental understanding of the role of education. Critics, be they teachers, educators, policy-makers etc., viewing the practice as ‘just another toolkit’ or skill to implement or ‘roll out’, impede the potential for philosophical exploration, losing the point of P4C’s deeper, developmental and ‘slow-burn’ approach. Occasionally during my research, I encountered people who associated philosophy in classrooms as akin to school ‘debating’. Debating amounts to trying to convince another of your argument, regardless of whether that argument is reasonable or sound. Collaborative philosophical enquiry with children certainly involves argumentation, but not without reasoned and critical analysis of one’s argument. There is no ‘winner’ at the end, only greater understanding of the nuances of philosophical and conceptual analysis and greater appreciation of democratic processes. The community of enquiry, which acts as the methodology for P4C, treats some contributions as invalid or incorrect without overly insisting on philosophical flawlessness while still keeping the dialogue open and allowing participants to express opinions freely.

P4C approaches can sometimes be confused with psychological ‘Circle Time’ (White, 2008) type perspectives of education. Like debating, this is also a misrepresentation – circle time aims to allow children to discuss their feelings and emotions in a friendly social environment, sometimes in order to help them feel better or console them in some way. Haynes (2008) disagrees that there is any connection between circle time and P4C, other than certain superficial features that someone inexperienced with a community of enquiry might observe, such as the fact that both activities require students to sit in a circle and talk openly. But this is where the similarity ends. P4C is an embodied logical process involving rationality and reasoning, creativity and imagination, with the methodology of the community of enquiry ensuring claims to truth are put to the test and subjected to critical scrutiny guided by the facilitator/practitioner

(Haynes, 2008). A democratic practice such as this involves considerable ‘risk taking’ as a facilitator, requiring sophisticated and confident teaching. However, P4C offers an effective framework where engaging with challenging and controversial issues becomes possible and desirable as a means of understanding the complexity of many various judgments, choices and decisions in our interrelated lives (Haynes and Murris, 2008).

Aside from this type of criticism, there are challenges faced by teachers practicing P4C, stemming more from the education system itself. In-service teachers are under considerable pressure to deliver an already packed curriculum to pupils. This is alongside teachers’ other school duties such as assessment of students, establishing and accounting for learning outcomes and acting *in loco parentis* for children in their care. Finding the time, motivation and capacity to support teachers engaging in P4C practice in the classroom represents a huge challenge, especially in terms of reconciling the assumptions and practice of P4C within the prevailing educational policy context (O’Riordan, 2013).

Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp generously gave their support to and engaged with those who shared their educational vision by making their philosophical resources widely available to adults, children and young people alike. On the whole, neither they, nor the IAPC, tried to restrict or control the global development of P4C and the different variations, innovations and methods of the programme by insisting that P4C is an exclusive brand or commercial venture, leading to a rich variety of practices around the world today.

P4C Practice and teachers' Perspectives

There have been several international research studies on the effects of regular P4C engagement that show evidence of improvement in various academic areas, such as students' oral language development (Millett and Tapper, 2011; Trickey and Topping, 2007), as well as statistically significant gains in critical and logical reasoning and improved educational attainment in reading, writing, maths, science and problem-solving skills (Gorard, Siddiqui and See, 2015; Millet and Tapper, 2011; Trickey and Topping, 2004; Sasseville, 1994). There is also evidence that suggests that these gains are durable and transferable (Fair et al. 2015; Topping and Trickey, 2007). A large body of research evidence indicates the positive impact of P4C on children's social and emotional skills (Campbell, 2002; Doherr, 2000, Sasseville, 1994; Trickey & Topping, 2004). There has also been a number of large scale studies – a Nuffield Foundation supported study into the non-cognitive effects of P4C (Siddiqui, Gorard and See, 2017) and an Education Endowment Foundation study, which tested whether a P4C programme could work in schools under best possible conditions (Gorard, Siddiqui and See, 2015). At present there is another larger scale study funded by the Education Endowment Foundation that is testing a scalable P4C model under everyday conditions in a large number of schools in the UK, due to be published in Spring 2021. This study aims to follow on from its previous 2015 study in order to "... test the [P4C] programme in more schools and over a longer timeframe, providing a more robust estimate of the impact" (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018: p.N/A).

The research studies mentioned above primarily focus on academic improvements or social development in children through regular engagement with P4C. Another aspect of research in this area tends to focus on the challenge associated with implementing P4C programmes into school curricula (Boylan,

Foley & McTernan, 2011; Lyle and Thomas-Williams, 2012). Chesters (2012), however, maintains that research about teacher/practitioner experiences of P4C practice is limited. Some critical discussion about practitioner experiences has taken place previously (Haynes, 2007, 2008; Haynes and Murriss, 2013), the focus of which has been on how children are positioned as enquirers and whether existing pedagogies supports this. My research is similarly positioned, taking into account social and political relations within an Irish educational context. My study examines teacher perspectives of their P4C practice in Irish Educate Together schools, interpreting the unarticulated sense of new and different understandings of democracy as unfixed and emergent within participants' interview excerpts. This interpretation encapsulates several different and challenging ideas regarding adult/teacher authority, adult-child interrelationships and children as knowers, encompassing questions about schools as democratic places (Haynes and Murriss, 2008) and what it means to be democratic in a P4C/Educate Together context, seeking to articulate what is created through the partnership of P4C and Educate Together.

There are two studies of note within the Irish context in which P4C and reflective practice featured significantly in the research. Firstly, Russell's (2007) examined how school children in a state funded Catholic denominated primary school in Dublin think and dialogue together about morality in a community of ethical enquiry facilitated by her. Over a four and a half year period, Russell conducted P4C sessions with a mixed-gender primary school class that focused on a sequence of structured discussions on a range of moral topics concerning issues of justice, freedom and responsibility, rights and duties, inclusiveness and friendship. Her primary focus was the children's thinking on these issues, particularly as it was shaped by the interactive process in which it occurred. Although Russell herself was not the object of the study, her research gives insight in terms of reflective practice. She found that, through

non-mainstream practices such as Thinking Time (a derivation of P4C set in the Irish context championed by Donnelly (1994)), children's thinking and moral selfhood *can* advance and develop. However, she also found that in order for this to happen, teachers need to be better able to help children reflect on the ways in which they are thinking for such a practice to flourish as part of a whole school policy. The evidence Russell accumulated through her study "suggests that the experience of a community of enquiry helps children to deliberate wisely, and encourages them to make informed and responsible judgements" (2007: p.182).

In a similar study, Roche (2011) used Donnelly's Thinking Time pedagogical approach to conduct a self-study action research enquiry into her teaching practice as a primary school teacher. Roche actively reflected on her pedagogy in order to become more dialogical and critical in her teaching practice, gradually re-conceptualizing her identity as a reflective and critical thinker and practitioner. She joined an association of teachers who wished to engage with Donnelly's Thinking Time strategy for their own professional interest and nourishment, and facilitated discussion with the children in her classroom using picture books as stimuli. Through her research, Roche transformed her outlook on education from the position of observer to that of observer of 'herself-in-relationship-with-her-students' and considers herself to be still evolving her personal philosophy of education:

I have come to understand that when a person enters into a dialectical relationship with thoughts and ideas, with others and themselves, thinking then becomes a practice of dialogue, a way of having a dialogic imagination ... a way of being in a dialogical relationship with knowledge, and a way of being in a living relationship with other people (2011: p.340).

Both Russell's (2007) and Roche's (2011) studies highlight the fact that, although infrequent, P4C has been the subject of research that has taken into

account practitioner perspectives and have, in the main, recommended the opening up of further possibilities of dialogue with children through the inclusion of P4C pedagogies on teacher education curricula as fundamental for broader discourses concerning democratic outlooks towards education in Ireland. This echoes Haynes and Murrells' (2011) calls for "serious exploration of the ground opened up through the introduction of philosophy with children" (p.286). My study adds to these discourses, emphasizing the need for discussion within this context to be further extended to include accounts of teachers' perspectives on how they view their P4C practice aligning with their wider educational outlooks and goals in terms of education for a democratic society.

Conclusion

This chapter presented some of the key concepts within the P4C literature landscape, such as the community of enquiry, collaborative thinking and dialogue that are most relevant to this study. These concepts are central to the idea of critical reflective practice as an alternative to conventional positivistic attitudes to education and within democratic education as a whole. The recommendations made by UNESCO (2011) that endorse the making of philosophical enquiry "a principle of primary and secondary education" amongst member states (p.3) was explored, presenting P4C as a practice whose supporters believe is both the means and the goal of democratic education and democratic citizenship. Existing studies involving P4C and reflective practice in Ireland were presented to highlight the importance of teacher perspectives for researching a democratic educational context. Alongside the theoretical foundations of P4C, some of the characteristics of this practice were also described and presented, drawing attention to the challenging and changeable role of the teacher and/or practitioner as simultaneously facilitator, guide, guardian, listener and co-enquirer (Haynes and Murrells, 2008). I make the point

that ‘child’ is located centrally within P4C which is presented as a transformative philosophy of childhood and education (Haynes, 2014), and a means of creating and exploring the possibility of philosophical dialogue with children. Views on practicing P4C and how it makes heavy demands on teachers were introduced – it is a challenging, uncertain and risky activity requiring the adoption of a fallibilistic understanding of knowledge and being able to relinquish the idea of a teacher’s role, seen in traditional didactic terms, as the ultimate authority on knowledge in the classroom. The perspective of teachers engaging in such a practice can offer valuable insight into critical and reflective educational viewpoints. In researching these perspectives, this study contributes to discourses on democratic education in Ireland. The following chapter presents and discusses the methodology of this research, providing an epistemological justification of the research approach, methods and procedures.

CHAPTER FOUR:

A Lived Enquiry Concerning Democratic Education

Introduction

The research approach taken for this study is articulated here as a 'lived enquiry'. It plots the unfolding perspectives on enquiry, dialogue, education and democracy that transformed my philosophical understanding and affected me deeply as a researcher through my interactions with teachers and my immersion in one Educate Together school, referred to as the 'lived' school, throughout the research period. This chapter gives an account of the methodology behind my research in order to provide justification for the selection processes and design of this study formulated as a lived enquiry. Clough and Nutbrown (2012) consider the idea of research methodology in terms of a “critical design attitude” where there is demonstrated a “clear, logical and reflexive relationship between research questions and field questions” which in turn provides “careful consideration of ethical questions” (2012: p.39). In this regard, the methodology of my research aims at articulating the research questions with the data creation processes. The research question that guided this approach was:

“What insights into education and democracy can be gained from a lived enquiry into teachers’ perspectives on P4C practice in a group of Irish Educate Together primary schools?”

Presented within this chapter are the critical design considerations of the study told through the story of my research as a lived enquiry. Firstly, the underlying philosophical, ontological and epistemological ideas about the

concept of ‘livedness’ and lived enquiry are presented, including the substantial influence of John Dewey, in particular the social dimension of his theories of enquiry. The framework behind a lived enquiry approach is discussed, focusing on the emergent nature of the perspectives and the unfolding of insight experienced throughout the research process.

The validity, reliability and meaningfulness of lived enquiry as a research framework are considered before discussing positionality within my study and some of the issues around how I located myself as a researcher. Positionality in this study was dynamic and evolving, expressing the ongoing transformation from philosophy graduate to philosophical practitioner. This dynamism underlines an explanation of the shift from enquiry to ‘lived’ enquiry that occurred within this study. I then explain how my research story unfolded and shifted direction, detailing how it enabled me to locate myself within the research as what I term an ‘embedded extern’, and how relationships built between P4C and Educate Together communities shaped my motivation and purpose for undertaking the research. Finally, the methods of this research are presented and examined in terms of how they suited the overall context of the research. This includes the piloting and design of semi-structured interview questions, how interviews were conducted and my presence in the ‘lived’ Educate Together school, in which I became an embedded extern.

This study was originally planned as a research enquiry inspired by John Dewey’s theory of enquiry. However, as the research unfolded and I became more immersed in the Educate Together and P4C worlds explored through this research, a ‘lived’ quality emerged that caused a positional shift both in how I viewed myself as a researcher and my research as a whole. The lived enquiry framework ties together methodologically with how I viewed and understood the unfurling pattern of events, research decisions and judgements that sculpted my research, allowing the defining ‘lived’ quality of this enquiry to emerge

reflexively through the process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Certain specific research methods and strategies used throughout the research process uncovered a synergy of perspectives that informed and shaped this lived enquiry into P4C practice in Irish Educate Together schools. It is the particularity of selecting and customising methods suited to the emergent approach of my research that is explained in this chapter.

Lived Enquiry

The descriptor ‘lived enquiry’ was developed by consolidating two different research concepts – one that features strongly within the world of qualitative research, and the other a characteristic of philosophical research. These were ‘lived experience’ and ‘enquiry’. Both concepts contain strong Deweyan elements, but the particular things I chose to emphasize within these concepts and how I chose to combine them became a methodology unique to my research journey. I approached my research as a philosophical enquiry, a deeply philosophical exploration of my research topic. Dewey’s ideas on enquiry grounded this approach from a classical pragmatist point of view, focusing on the problematic that inspired my research journey – how might philosophy exist in Irish schools? However, the response from the teachers I met, that is, their engagement and how they welcomed my questions, along with my interest in the value of dialogue, meant that I emphasised the social dimension of Dewey’s enquiry: the web of relationships, influences and events brought about by engaging in such an enquiry and following where it leads. This was combined with the Deweyan concept of lived experience – the integration of people’s stories, scholarship and activism, and a general fusing together of varied perspectives and life experiences into meaningful accounts – thereby emphasising the gradual unfurling of my understanding, through which significant meaning could emerge. ‘Lived enquiry’ thus came to encapsulate the

unfolding and emergent nature of my methodology, the various approaches taken and the many decisions made throughout the research process.

Conducting a lived enquiry involved deeply immersing myself within the socially constituted aspects of the enquiry, allowing myself to be affected and transformed by the relationships and experiences encountered throughout the research. Lived experience, as understood within qualitative research frameworks, features within my construction of lived enquiry, however it is not the central focus of the methodology. Lived enquiry therefore may seem to share similar territory in terms of “total topic immersion” (Kaplan, 2007: p.91) with other methodologies that contain relatively comparable names. Narrative enquiry, collaborative inquiry, heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) or mindful inquiry, may sound similar to lived enquiry. However, these differ substantially from lived enquiry with regard to the central emphasis upon and thinking around lived experience. Further, my adoption and interpretation of the term shares very little with Heron’s (1998) understanding of “lived inquiry”, by which he means “simply the active, innovative and examined life which seeks to both transform and understand more deeply the human condition... [involving] ...the disciplined passion of inquiring engagement with the subtle and phenomenal worlds” (Heron, 1998: p.17).

Lived experience, as often understood in qualitative research, emphasizes a researcher’s human experiences as unique in perceiving knowledge, acknowledging “the integrity of the individual life” and “how separate life experiences” respond to “larger public and social themes”, thus allowing the researcher to “use a single life to learn about society and about how individual experiences are communicated” (Boylorn, 2008: p.489). This, however, is not the interpretation of lived experience used for this research. This study utilises lived experience by emphasising the social dimension of John Dewey’s theory of enquiry. Dewey prioritised social aims and values throughout his broader

philosophical thought. Social values and ideals, although provisional and fallible, nonetheless contain an objectively natural existence since they reside in people's social experiences (Shook, 2014). Enquiry for Dewey *is social* – it does not happen in a vacuum – and social values and ideals form the basis of his notion of democracy, which is itself a pivotal extension of education:

Dewey's vision of the proper functioning of democracy is grounded in the possibility that shared goods can be evaluated, reevaluated, and mutually adjusted in an intelligent and experimental social inquiry (Shook, 2014: p.52).

Dewey's social aspect of enquiry, his social philosophy, informs his philosophy of democracy and which in turn *must* be a philosophy of education (Shook, 2014). It is by encouraging citizens to operate as members of a community that social enquiry, that is enquiry actively pursued in cooperation with others, that Dewey believed a citizen is best prepared for the demands of responsible membership within the democratic community. This social dimension of enquiry became an important aspect of my research because of the unfolding of perspectives encountered amongst the P4C and Educate Together communities I engaged with. Dewey's view on community is one sustained by communication and bound by a 'common understanding' arrived at through communication:

Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication... Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – like-mindedness... (Dewey, 2004 [1916]: p.4).

I thus came to understand both Educate Together and P4C as communities in a Deweyan sense – a group of individuals bound by shared values and beliefs about education, active in their willingness to question and discuss those beliefs, with an overall view towards enhancing democracy as a way of life.

Lived experience here refers to the central ‘lived’ component of the study – a philosophical enquiry that incorporates and emphasises the social dimension of John Dewey’s theories of enquiry. The ‘livedness’ of my research does not relate to the type of insider approach often associated with other qualitative studies. By this I mean Flick’s (1998) suggestion of the insider as a “professional stranger” (p.59) – someone who has to be accepted, become familiar and yet still remain distant from the research group being studied. Rather, ‘livedness’ for this study is concerned specifically with the immersion of the researcher within the social relations associated with searching for and dialoguing with communities of enquiry through various research activities, involving, in this case, the observation and leading of P4C and Thinking Time sessions, carrying out interviews and conversing with teachers in various contexts. A connection between researching lived experience and philosophical pragmatism exists here through the mutually shared “belief that human existence inherently involves the active practice of making meaning through interaction with our environment” (Stark, 2014: p.88). In so doing, lived experience as a field of research here becomes not the primary focus of the research, but fertile ground from which a deeply meaningful enquiry might proceed, one that aligns with and embraces Dewey’s notion of community. For Dewey, individuals develop through their communicative relationships within communities. Regardless of who those individuals might be, a genuine community for Dewey has at its core shared values (as well as aims, beliefs and

aspirations). The holding of shared values like this is not passive – it is sustained through activities, particularly communication:

Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community (Dewey, 1927 [1946]: p.149).

Community, then, becomes an environment where values are not just created and sustained, but a foundation for the creation of knowledge. A precondition of communities for Dewey is that they must have an “*interactive or associate nature*; they must hold *shared values*, which arise out of *shared action*” (Hildebrandt, 2008: p.113). Comparably, this lived enquiry emerged from my deep engagement with a community transposable with Dewey's ideas, one that meets his conditions of community within which there lies “a central core of common felt values which operate as significant values for the community” (Campbell, 1995: p.175).

Within my idea of lived enquiry there exists the notion of self-transformation, where I as a researcher am different at the end of the research project than as I was at the beginning. My understanding of philosophy, P4C and ‘child’, education and democracy, and the world of teaching, children, and the school were ultimately changed after I sought out and investigated the perspectives of those actively engaged in their practice within one or many of these realms. What I refer to as the ‘livedness’ of the enquiry is thus a crucial component of the research as it shaped and moulded my interpretation and understanding within and between the different realms I was exploring. Hence this study evolved from a *research* enquiry into a *lived* enquiry as I attempted to understand, interpret and articulate the research through the dynamic of the social spheres and communities within which it unfolded.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Lived enquiry is inspired by John Dewey's theory of enquiry, which, according to Levi (2010), "begins with doubt and ends with the removal of doubt" (Levi, 2010: p.99). The pattern of Dewey's theory of enquiry consists of several stages: "the emergence of doubt grounded in a problematic situation; observation of conditions that form elements of the nature of the problem (induction); suggestion of a possible solution to the problem, reasoning or deduction; and implementation of a solution (with possible feedback loops between the last three stages until the problematic situation is resolved)" (Harris, 2014: p.304). As mentioned previously, crucial to Dewey's thinking is the idea of the inseparability of enquiry from its social environment (Czujko-Moszyk, 2014). For Dewey, thinking *is* enquiry. Our ideas and our concepts are not independent pre-existing entities but rather they are distinguishable by the roles they play as instruments in accomplishing our enquiry (Frega, 2010). Dewey's enquiry is inherently experimental with a practical and pragmatic aim – to re-establish the fluidity and effectiveness of human activity (Levi, 2010). Learning for Dewey is a product of a person's interaction with and experience of their environment, where understanding arises as much from what we do with our bodies as what we do with our minds (Gregory, 2006). Other people comprise a crucial part of the environment within which we interact and the settled experiences that result from our enquiries are through how we experience ourselves within our social and physical or material world:

For Dewey, all meanings are consequences of socially shared action, and all objects, all truths, including the formal laws of logic themselves, are the fallible and contingent objectives of inquiry (Garrison, 1999: p.291).

I consider this dimension of Dewey's theory of enquiry to embody what I mean by the social aspect of this enquiry. This is central to the 'lived' component of the research methodology since knowledge for Dewey is

dependent upon how well experiences contribute to making progress in our lives (Berding, 1997). He viewed enquiry in relation to the life-long process of learning and interacting with our environment – when a challenge arises, our usual mode of interaction is disrupted, recognized as problematic and we proceed to change it and integrate it into a balanced interactive system so that we may go back to our lives (Deters, 2006). This does not happen in isolation, but by virtue of the fact that we are connected to one another by our social conditions and relationships in our lifeworld. During this process we are transformed, getting to know ourselves and our environment better. It is this meaning-making process that Dewey calls enquiry (Frega, 2010). At the heart of this process lies the idea of an emergent and gradual transformation – this is what I associate most strongly with lived enquiry.

Through an unsettling experience of uncertainty surrounding how the subject of philosophy related to me, and I to it, in practical terms, an enquiry was sparked within me and my being in the world. I became moved to enquire beyond myself, amongst my surroundings, calling upon current social spheres and creating new ones, as I entered a world of practice, embracing a different way of viewing and interacting with philosophy as I went about tackling and considering the problem by engaging with those around me. Exploring and engaging in philosophy from a practitioner perspective involved in different ways encountering, dialoguing and reflecting with others. It was a completely new experience for me to establish relationships and exchange ideas with the various people I met in different social domains as I sought meaningfulness in my enquiry. This practical approach to doing philosophy made a welcome break from the solitary experience of studying the subject I had in the past.

There are certain similarities of this approach with Meyer 's (2010) study into a course she taught and participated in involving shared and individual enquiry, utilising field notes in the form of written texts, performances,

photographs, poems, or a piece of original music. Emphasising an awareness of everyday living and seeing the world with fresh eyes, she elucidated an account of living enquiry in order to enquire into “how to live with the quality of awareness that sees newness, truth and beauty in daily life” (p.96). Meyer felt compelled to explore what it means to belong in the modern world, focusing on her selfhood, “they” and “other”, and her surroundings, in order to seek answers to the question “How do we begin to ‘uncover’ the impact of our worldliness to see what lies underneath?” (Meyer, 2010: p.86). However, there is one significant difference between my lived enquiry approach and Meyer’s living enquiry. Although Meyer’s (2010) enquiry involved “shared investigations of narratives, histories and realities into which we were born and now live and work” (p.86) and explored the lived experiences of “everydayness and the immediate participation in daily life” (p.86), the Deweyan element of social understanding that aims at the improvement of the social life of the community, be that community a school, a civic organisation, the “state, or whatever ‘public’ that one might wish to focus” (Stone, 1994: p.47), is crucially missing. Meyer’s living enquiry aims at self-understanding within her lived environment and at sharing these understandings through a living enquiry curriculum that “provided a space for young students to openly explore and begin to understand their own relationship with the world and, in doing so, conceivably push back the notion that they are always already determined and fated by it” (Meyer, 2010: p.88). There is, however, a notable absence of applicability regarding the social community central to Dewey’s idea of enquiry to which my research subscribes. The lived component of this research does *not* refer to an internal discovery of the self and how it lives and relates to the other as Meyer’s understanding of living enquiry suggests. Instead, it refers to the combined sense of meaning between self and other that results from my position as embedded extern, allowing a deeply immersive exploration of the world of

education, democracy and practice. This embedded external idea is dealt with in more detail in the section in this chapter entitled Positionality.

Research Framework

My research takes a critically reflexive approach to investigating P4C practice in Educate Together schools and points towards practical knowledge and understanding through a merging of the personal and the social, theory and practice, framed within my being and action in a participatory worldview (Carr and Steutal, 2005). This resonates with Aristotle's ideas on practical wisdom or judgement (*phronesis*). Phronesis is the guiding wisdom of the practitioner and differs to that of the artisan (*techne*) in that it is not a method to determine what skills need to be applied to get something done – it is, instead, concerned with what it is that *ought* to be done (Grundy, 1989):

Not only is praxis a social action, always taking place between people, but phronesis also manifests itself communally. For the Greeks it was in the arena of judgment-making with respect to the affairs of the pupils in which phronesis operated. Practical judgment-making was synonymous with democratic deliberation, that is, deliberation by the demos (the people) (Grundy, 1989 in Carr, 1989, p.72).

Furthermore, phronesis in an educational research setting such as this means this enquiry bears certain characteristics to a practitioner research environment that “puts a premium on... the context-dependence of first-person experience” (Dunne, 2005: p.373) and, in doing so, reflects existing literatures regarding the notion of teaching as a practice (Campbell, 2003; Carr, 1989; Dunne, 1993, 2003, 2005, Higgins, 2011). This is because it is concerned with understanding practice and investigating perspectives of P4C practice from both a personal point of view and those amongst a sample group of Educate Together teachers.

The concept of ‘livedness’ within this research is not bound to any one individual methodological framework. It obliged me as a researcher to be as deeply immersed in the community I was researching as possible. Livedness provides a grounding for the thoughtful integration of perspectives – perspectives only accessible through deep and reciprocal relationships – that gave rise to the personal paradigms that shaped my actions as a researcher being present within a community of practitioners (Wicks, Reason and Bradbury, 2008). ‘Lived’ and ‘livedness’ here also contain some element of transformation for me as a researcher and how I viewed my research. This was not an intentional transformation but an emergent one, altering my outlook towards the original problematic that spurred my enquiry. Engaging in a lived enquiry necessitated me *allowing* myself to be affected and my outlooks changed in this way. For instance, democracy and democratic education were not concerns of mine at the beginning of my research journey. However, these ideas grew alongside my intuition that conducting my research as a lived enquiry was the way to proceed. It was only by spending a significant amount of time learning more about Educate Together as a social movement and the transformational aims of P4C that I noticed how inherently connected education and democracy were in an Educate Together/P4C context. The value I attached to my research ultimately began to change as I came to understand philosophy as the very principle of education, and education as the enactment of the value of democracy as a way of life.

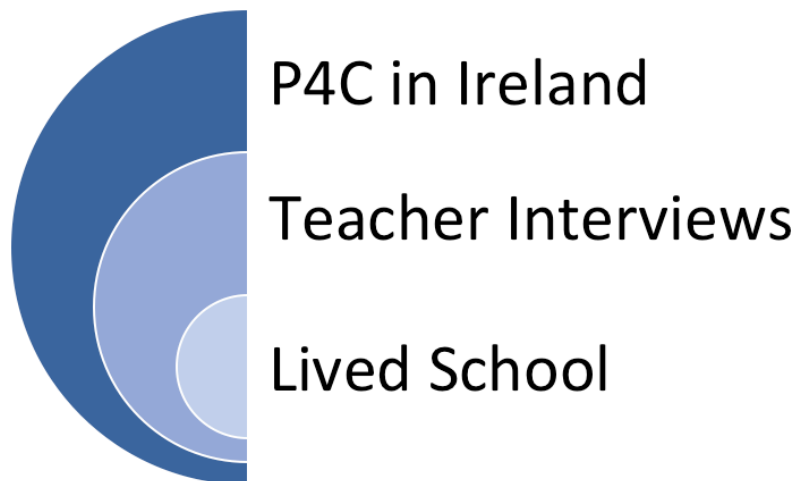
Conducting my enquiry in this way meant that I became bound to rather than ‘detached’ from the subject of my research – every aspect of the relationships created and sustained throughout the research process, every encounter, every experience, every occurrence, was potentially relevant to my study. In terms of objectivity, this is compatible with De Laine’s (2000) emphasis on partnerships between researchers and participants. De Laine calls

for “more participation and less observation, of being *with* and *for* the other, not looking *at*” (2000: p.16), stressing the same prioritisation of the reciprocity of relationships so crucial to my study. Such an emphasis falls within a broad interpretive paradigm rather than a positivist one, where objectivity, researcher as ‘outsider’ and distance from the subject becomes less of an agenda through engaging with the issue of researcher-participant reactivity, rather than building it out of the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). My commitment to creating and maintaining reciprocal relationships with participants was pivotal to my research process, meaning that this study corresponds with De Laine’s emphasis, setting apart ‘lived’ enquiry from enquiry into lived experiences where the researcher remains unaffected from his/her research environment. Certain specific ethical considerations arose from my lived enquiry approach, which are discussed in detail under the heading Methods of the Research later in this chapter.

My lived enquiry did not start from a desire to change something ‘out there’. Through an orientation of change *with* others (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), I attempted understand how philosophy might exist in Irish schools by seeking out and listening carefully to the voices I encountered. The research framework therefore involved three different yet interrelated realms: P4C in Ireland, my interviews with Educate Together teachers and my presence in the lived school (see Diagram 1 below). These were the realms from where I gathered and analysed data for my research. This was done through conversations and dialogic exchanges with the people I encountered and forged social relationships with, and the semi-structured interviews with six Educate Together teachers. These data were analysed by conducting several waves of thematic analysis that ensured the accuracy and integrity of the perspectives that were revealed. My approach to data gathering and analysis is explained in

greater detail in the section entitled Methods of the Research later in this chapter.

Diagram 1: Lived Enquiry Framework



These three realms constitute my research environment and where I gathered my research data. Each realm was interconnected with the other – the lived school was where I spent most of my time; the interviews with teachers emerged from my presence in the lived school; and I was constantly participating and seeking out dialogic encounters with proponents of philosophy in Irish schools throughout my research journey. What cannot be overstated about these interconnected realms is how important the dialogic and reciprocal relationships forged within them came to be. These relationships were based on a shared belief in democracy as a value – both I and the people I met sensed a link between education and democracy. They arose from and were kept alive through discussion, conversation and dialogic exchanges on and around education and democracy. In the majority of cases, the people who I developed a relationship with did not have a formal background in the subject of philosophy, creating a dynamic between myself as a researcher with knowledge of philosophy and the participants with knowledge of teaching and education. Creating and maintaining these relationships entailed the willingness and trust of the participants along with my discernment of when and how to engage in a

dialogue and what to dialogue about. I did not develop a social relationship with everyone I encountered – only with those who seemed genuinely interested and eager to explore ideas surrounding philosophy, education and democracy. This was the case with the 6 Educate Together teachers I conducted interviews with, teachers who were practicing P4C having come to it through their own individual trajectories. These relationships rooted the enquiry as lived, genuine and emergent, not only providing access to data for my research question, but also affecting how I understood my research and how I wished to apply it.

A related consequence that emerged through my participation and engagement in these social relations was the gradual sense of belonging to a community. This was sensed most potently in the lived school where I regularly practiced P4C. I gradually felt a part of the school as a community, sharing in its day-to-day life – the questions, tragedies, successes and challenges faced by the school itself and/or the children and staff – were not just felt, but *shared*. Sharing is perhaps the overriding ethic I felt in terms of the lived school and the community I came to know during my research process. The notion of sharing, of experiences and knowledge, but also not to feel under pressure or obligated to share, rather sharing as a means of inclusion and diversification, was sensed through the lived experience of being present and participating in the school for so long. Sharing for the lived school was characteristic of the common values that bind together the members of a community for Dewey, and ultimately aimed at furthering a mutual understanding of democratic approaches to education and pedagogy for the school as a whole.

Validity, Reliability and Meaningfulness

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that validity should be a “matter of degree rather than an absolute state” (p.133). Researchers are part of the world, bound to it and active within it, where absolute and complete

objectivity is not possible, meaning that the perspective of others is equally as valid as our own – the job of research is to uncover and expose these. Therefore, validity attaches to accounts as opposed to data or methods; “it is the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important” (p.134).

Similarly, reliability can be considered in terms of dependability and consistency; for research to be reliable, it must be able to “demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context (however defined), then similar results would be found” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: p.146). In this regard, I take Thomas’ (2009) suggestion that too much focus on validity and reliability can be a distraction for educational research and, instead, look towards the importance of ‘rigour’ in social science research. The rigorousness of my research, that is, the elements that ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, is to be found in some of the actions and approaches taken throughout my lived enquiry as it developed and unfolded. For instance, I had two supervisors for this research, one of whom was the principal of the lived school where I spent most of my time during the research process. This supervisor facilitated and supported all aspects of my lived enquiry, ultimately acting as an invaluable gateway for accessing and connecting with authentic and dependable information on the world of Educate Together. I also completed a two-day SAPERE Level 1 Foundation Course⁹ in London in June 2015. This course aimed at “encouraging philosophical questioning and dialogue, facilitating a P4C enquiry in classrooms and identifying resources to stimulate rich discussions among students” (SAPERE, 2020, p.N/A). I enrolled on this course because I wanted to learn more about what was involved in the practice of P4C and to experience what it was like to

⁹ SAPERE Level 1 Foundation Course: <https://www.sapere.org.uk/courses/level-1-courses.aspx>

dialogue within a community of enquiry. Other considerations that affected the rigour of my study are explained in greater detail under the heading Methods of the Research later in this chapter.

Enquiry is sparked by a desire for meaningfulness. It was my desire to find a meaningful place for philosophy to reconcile my experience of the subject in university that started my enquiry into philosophy in Irish schools. The meaning that trickled down through my lived enquiry transformed my experience of the research and how I valued it. And it was the meaningfulness that was conveyed to me by the teachers I interviewed that enabled me to see a connection between P4C practice and the Educate Together movement. I wanted to try and ensure that the relationship I forged with each teacher would act as a gauge of meaningfulness – not just in terms of the perspectives I sought, but also meaningful *to the participants themselves* – that is, “reflective of the way in which participants actually experience and construe the situations in the research” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: p.138).

Positionality

Positionality refers to an individual’s worldview and the position they adopt in relation to their specific research task, locating the researcher within three areas: the subject, the participants and the research context and process (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). At the beginning of my research process, I envisioned my position to be that of PhD researcher. As my research began to unfold however, I felt my position start to change – ‘PhD researcher’ did not seem to adequately reflect just how deeply embedded I had become in the lived school, even though I was not a member of staff or a parent of a child there.

Positionality is the idea that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their beliefs and values in their research, seeking to understand their part in the research and the affect it may have (Bryman, 2012). It involves beliefs about ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics, requiring an awareness of one's views on truth and knowledge claims as well as researcher indicators such as class and gender, and proximity to the field of research. According to Merriam et al (2001) “[p]ositionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’” (p.411), suggesting that positionality in research can shift and change.

Transformation, characteristic of my lived enquiry, took the form of a reassessment of the relationship between my research and the research environment. This was a gradual awareness, unfolding through the social relationships created in the lived school and the broader Educate Together and P4C communities. The transformation caused a shift in how I saw my position within the research, moving from a research outsider ‘looking in’ at the interrelated worlds of P4C and Educate Together, to someone deeply present and active within the socially construed substrates of those same worlds. This positional shift was facilitated by the kind of reflexivity enabled through my lived enquiry and was fuelled in part by my motivation to conduct ethical research:

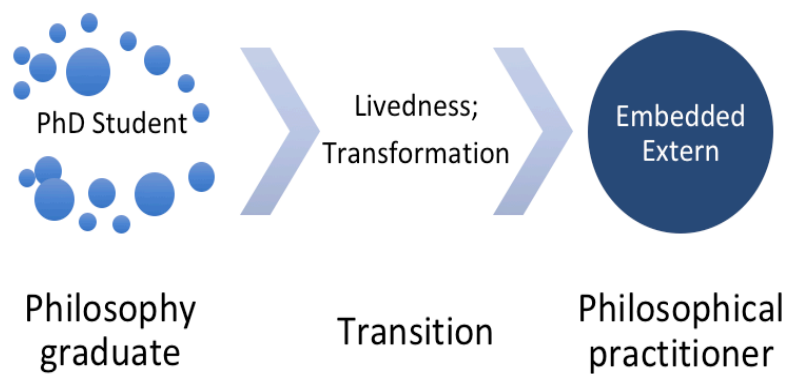
[I]t is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research... (Sultana, 2007: p.380).

I understood my positional shift by reflexively considering both my own viewpoints and the sensitivity of my own cultural, political and social contexts (Bryman, 2012), the type of examination associated with reflection but rooted within a critical perspective outlook, sensitive to status quo norms and issues of power and control (Cole and Gary-Knowles, 2000).

My understanding of reflexivity aligns with Johns' (2009) 'looking back' at the self that emerges from the reflexive spiral of 'looking within' – that is, the reflective research process of the enquiry incorporating a reflexively critical perspective. The reflexive “spiral” in Johns' description may be a little misleading here. It is not meant to imply that the reflective practitioner might become trapped within a recurring loop, but rather a “‘looking back’ to make sense of self emerging through a sequence of experiences towards self-realisation however that might be expressed” (Johns, 2009: p.5).

Whereas Dewey, in *How We Think* (1933), described reflexivity as links in a chain where one link provides a trace for the next link to connect with, Johns suggests replacing links in a chain with insights, so that “we can see that each subsequent experience is infused with insights gained from previous experiences” (Johns, 2009: p.5). This is not usually a linear process as one may reflect randomly over the course of a year or more and make little connection between one experience and another. Similarly, reflexivity in my research meant becoming aware of my awareness, turning a critical gaze towards myself as researcher. I began to realize that my inclination was towards allowing myself to be affected and changed by my research, embracing the possibility of transformation, allowing myself to become something else, something other than I was at the beginning through being present alongside the teachers and children in the lived school. It was this type of reflexivity that made me aware of how affected I was becoming by the social relationships I was engaging with and spending time amongst that I perceived my positionality to change from that of a PhD researcher to an embedded extern (see Diagram 2 below).

Diagram 2: Positional Shift



Shaping my Unfolding Research Story

I am a philosophy graduate with a deep interest in philosophy in education. I use the term philosophy *in* education as opposed to philosophy *of* education to emphasize my interest in philosophy, broadly understood, as a feature of curricular and school life. The entry point of my research starts with myself as a non-nationally qualified teacher and philosophy graduate conducting a social science research study in an educational setting for the first time. An unsatisfactory experience of studying philosophy in university did not deter me from my belief that philosophy had something important to offer in the education of children. I began searching for ways in which philosophy could be a means of developing and teaching critical thinking to children. It was only after discovering Lipman and Sharp's Philosophy for Children programme that I became fascinated with the idea of philosophy in Irish schools. At the beginning of my research journey, I had difficulty locating where I as researcher might 'fit' amongst the different realms of the study and from where I might go about researching what it was I wanted to investigate

The character of my research evolved from a linear experience to an emergent one – the perspectives and meaningfulness that emerged was dynamic, unfolding with different encounters as I responded to the things I was

learning and coming to understand about my research. When I began my research I regarded it as simply a postgraduate research study. In March 2015 when I submitted my Postgraduate Research Project Approval (RDC1) form, which presented my planned research topic and design, I stated that my research was a Deweyan enquiry aimed at addressing “a contested ground regarding P4C practices that practitioners must navigate by themselves” (see Appendix 01). I considered my role as a researcher as one which would shed light on P4C practice, specifically Lipman’s idea of a classroom community of enquiry, by reviewing the literature, keeping field notes and reflecting on my practice, and interviewing teachers. The realms in which I was interacting I saw as the ‘research environment’ – something objectifiable, external and distant from me and the value I would later come to attach to it. There is little there about the extent I would eventually go to in order to immerse myself within my research, to the point where it seemed unfitting to refer to a ‘research environment’ at all – it felt misplaced and essentially removed from my being-in-the-world as I continued to develop my research.

That was how I viewed my position at the beginning of my research journey. At this point I embarked on several research activities with the aim of informing and deepening my understanding of the various realms concerned with my research topic. I began practicing P4C with a class of twenty-four children in the lived school. I conducted P4C sessions with them for roughly ninety minutes once a week for three years from September 2014 to June 2017. I would arrive at lunchtime and go to the staff room, where all the teachers of the lived school were having lunch, to talk to their teacher and some of the other teachers in the school. I would bring the class out of their classroom and down to the gym hall where there was adequate space to move around for different activities as part of my facilitation and so we could all sit in a circle on large wooden benches. After the P4C session had finished I would bring them back to

their classroom and, depending on what their teacher had planned for them for the rest of the afternoon, I would leave and meet with the principal of the school or stay in the classroom with them and join in a learning activity or listen to them talk about a project they had been working on until it was home time. I continued my P4C practice in this way with the same class of children for three years, establishing the same friendship and relationship with both the children and with all three teachers that took the class at the start of the school year every September. The P4C sessions became a means for me to be more present in the lived school – the conversations I had in the staffroom with teachers from others classes led to me calling in on them in their classrooms to talk; I would stay behind after home time engaged in conversations with these same teachers who were always interested in listening and talking about values relating to philosophy and education.

During this beginning stage I felt a certain sense of being an ‘outsider’ – I was practicing P4C regularly in the lived school, yet I was not a teacher there. I also did not know any other philosophy graduates or philosophical enthusiasts with an interest in education or philosophy in schools. I kept what I originally called a ‘reflective journal’ to log these activities and my thoughts and reflections around them for the three years of my P4C practice in the immersion school. However, this journal turned out to be in effect a notebook of field notes. I was merely going through the motions of journaling as a novice researcher – journaling as a method felt forced, unnatural and too mechanical. It felt like it was something that I as a researcher was just ‘supposed to do’. I never knew if I was commenting on the correct aspects of the encounters I had and I found it very difficult to capture accurately the experiences of engaging with teachers. Trying to be reflective by putting things into words in a journal felt like I was not doing justice to the perspectives unfolding around me. My Confirmation of Route (RDC2) form, submitted in June 2016, reflects how in

the early stages of my research I viewed the purpose of journaling and what I thought it was supposed to add to my study: “The idea behind this type of self-study [journaling method] is to utilise reflective writing – recording the events and experiences within my research-related life in order to retrace how I arrived at personal assumptions and reconstruct critical incidents” (see Appendix 02).

The journal entries provided a tangible point of reference for interviews, a means to compare my practice of philosophy with the teachers in my study and insights to inform my study as a whole. Although I did not use the journal entries in my data analysis, they were made use of when I encountered different episodes or occurrences that resonated with me in some way, helping me to compare my own P4C practice and understanding of philosophy in schools with that of teachers. For instance, if the same type of experience happened in two different P4C sessions that I had engaged in or observed. The classroom observations in particular allowed me to learn more about the teachers that were participating in the study and about their attitude and approach to practicing P4C, ultimately helping to solidify and enhance my relationships with participants. Both the journal entries and classroom observations of participants did not provide data in the same way as the semi-structured interviews did, they nevertheless allowed me to learn more about and gain different practitioner perspectives on P4C.

It was the futility of keeping a journal under the belief that it was the source of my reflectivity that paved the way for my realisation of how affected I was becoming by the *livedness* of my enquiry. It became apparent that I was reflecting upon the encounters with teachers and people within the realms of my research elsewhere; attempting to keep records of the experiences I had through my encounters did not prompt reflection, rather reflection occurred after, or sometimes towards the end of, the encounters themselves. These encounters with teachers and others always moved towards the philosophically educational.

They were, in a sense, ‘democratized’ by the encounter itself – ideas shared through a kind of democratic ‘embroidery’ of two people meeting and having an impromptu discussion openly and willingly. They were reflective encounters in that they both prompted and incorporated reflection, which would then be brought into the next encounter, almost cumulatively, or, at least, reflectively recursive. My ‘reflective journal’ never turned out how I planned or expected it to, and this realisation marked the middle point in my research story – where my positionality started to shift, away from being a PhD student and postgraduate researcher towards an embedded extern.

Becoming an ‘Embedded Extern’

The idea of the ‘embedded extern’ emerged as my positionality shifted, created in order to encapsulate the sense that engaging in this type of study transformed how I valued what I was investigating. ‘Embedded’ reflected the livedness of my study and ‘extern’ expressed the research dynamic of my non-nationally qualified teacher status and philosophy graduate background deeply engaged and involved within a school community. Understanding my position in this way was not a ‘light bulb’ moment – it was a gradual realization attained through a reflexivity that what I was involved in made me want to pursue what I was doing as an innate good. I felt a connection with Lipman and Sharp’s early IAPC Philosophy for Children programme where philosophy graduates began learning about teaching communities of philosophical enquiry in schools in the US after seeing the BBC series ‘Socrates for Six Year Olds’ on Youtube (Coleduca, 2008). Being an embedded extern meant I had the confidence I was going about my research rigourously (Morrison, 1996) – I no longer felt like an ‘imposter’ (Laursen, 2008).

Being an embedded extern afforded me the freedom to focus on different kinds of research activities in given situations – sometimes I focused on

dialogue, other times on experiences attained from my P4C practice, or meeting and talking to a group of teachers or philosophical enthusiasts at a conference or symposium. Occasionally certain outlooks would resonate with one another and a particularly vibrant and rich encounter would result. Notable in this regard is how much time I spent being present, not just in the lived school, but becoming embedded in the different realms of my research. There was a significant time commitment involved in the hope that I would not miss any opportunity to dialogue or encounter the ‘other’. The actions I took, that is, the methods of this research, were geared towards making sure that my research was not ‘transactionary’ (Kitwood, 1977), where the researcher is welcomed into the world of the participants before taking what he or she needs for their research and departing. Throughout my research journey I met many teachers who were interested in traversing the world of philosophy but few philosophy graduates who were interested in traversing the world of teaching and schools. Therefore, the purpose for me as a researcher was to locate a place within my research from where I could listen carefully and sensitively to the voices within a P4C/Educate Together context, with motivation to do so increasing the further my research developed and new layers of meaning were peeled back.

Conducting my research as an embedded extern strengthened the belief that emerged from the social relationships central to my study that philosophy can and should exist in a more practically applicable way, different from traditional academic philosophical understandings, and seen at the core of a connection between philosophy, education and democracy (Biesta, 2010, 2011, 2015; Brosio, 2000; Haynes and Murris, 2011; UNESCO, 2008). This study reveals a conception of philosophy as a means of democratic education through the lived and situated nature of the enquiry that shaped and gave meaning to the research. This conception emerged as the enquiry unfolded and with it a re-

evaluation of my conception of philosophy, as I am transformed from philosophy graduate to P4C practitioner.

Methods of the Research

The data gathered for this study was drawn from the three main spheres of this research – my presence in the lived Educate Together school, my practice of P4C and interviews with Educate Together teachers. This section explains how each sphere was experienced, recorded and analysed. The methods selected for this process were chosen for the purpose of unearthing sentiments within the richness of the research context – that is, notions surrounding democratic education and education for democracy in Educate Together schools through the practice of P4C.

Research Contexts

A plurality of contexts are involved in this research. These include my educational background as a philosophy graduate, my historical background as a child attending a Church of Ireland primary school and multi-denominational secondary school, and my social background as a white male from a working class environment in Dublin. Significant for the context of this study is the fact that it took place within an Educate Together environment, where I became an embedded extern in the lived school, developed my P4C practice and engaged in dialogue at every possible opportunity with Educate Together teachers. The Educate Together context became very important early on in my study when I began to recognise that the teachers I was alongside were inclined towards the ‘democratic’ in the things they said and the things they did *as* teachers. No other group that I came across throughout the research process had this same outlook towards democracy and philosophy. These contexts are complemented further by other factors such as: conducting educational research as an English

language teacher but not a nationally qualified teacher, my deeply held desire to see philosophy, either as a formal subject in the school curriculum or integrated in some other way into Irish schools, and my willingness to dialogue with others who lay outside of an Educate Together context but within a larger sphere of P4C and democratic education in Ireland. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) assert that research within the field of education is very often value-bound and the subjective and contextual aspects of a researcher's positionality can change over time. I did not attempt to inflate these contexts nor promote one above another, but rather I tried to keep these contexts alive as my enquiry progressed. This meant acquiring a very considered approach to being alongside teachers, careful listening without trying to summarize or deduce their perspectives and those of the children under their care.

Keeping these contexts alive throughout this study enabled a depth of insight to be drawn from the social domain within which this research took place. This social domain consisted of different social spheres – colleagues, teachers, friends, individuals – and my interactions within them – interviews, dialogues and the various participatory encounters that took place through being alongside Irish Educate Together P4C practitioners as well as with the various realms of the 'other' – throughout my pursuit for meaning. This domain materialised not through my efforts alone, but rather grew from the close relationships forged with others that resulted from focusing on the social aspect of Dewey's theory of enquiry.

Ethical Protocol, Issues and Dilemmas

I went to considerable lengths to ensure the integrity of the meaning that emerged from this study. For example, I met all interviewees several times before I interviewed them for the study. This entailed meeting them socially firstly, then on another occasion to observe a P4C session facilitated by them

(or in one case a session conducted by me and observed by the teacher in question). This was done to ensure that these teachers understood that I as a researcher was interested in their practice from a philosophic point of view, rather than a profession or critical one. It also helped to establish trust and showed a consideration of care and respect for participants.

Research ethics approval for this study was granted by Plymouth University School of Education in November 2015 (see Appendix 03). The Board of Management of the lived school also discussed and approved my presence as a PhD researcher in their school. Central to the idea of ethical approval is the notion of informed consent, arising from a participant's right to freedom and self-determination, and the basis of an "implicit contractual relationship" between the researcher and the researched, serving as a foundation upon which subsequent ethical considerations can be structured (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: p.53). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) suggest the researcher should remain "an open book" about their project and acknowledge that their participation is doing the researcher a great favour by volunteering their time, insight and privacy (p.69). This helps to develop a feeling of trust between the researcher and individuals in the research setting.

In order to ensure the above contexts were kept alive throughout my enquiry, certain ethical issues were addressed. One such concern was the impartiality of the study, considering the level of depth amongst the social spheres that made up the study and the relationships I forged with the players within them. I was aware that due to the closeness I had built between myself as researcher and the teachers I was engaging with as often as I could, there may be a risk of partiality in my findings – I was spending a lot of time with teachers and participants in the lived school, I often wondered where my research ended and my views towards it began. However, this risk was mitigated by the fact that I was not 'helplessly' or completely submerged in the world inhabited by

the participants of this research. My research was conducted *alongside* or in the presence of these teachers, rather than merely *with* them or by taking their place. I was not looking for an exact representation or replication of their role, but merely how their perspective of their P4C practice fitted with their experiences of being Educate Together teachers. As a non-nationally qualified teacher, I remained impartial by a.) critically assessing what I observed from and spoke about with the teachers I was alongside and b.) conducting detailed and focused analysis of the data involving multiple waves, in order to represent as accurately as possible the resonance I found between P4C practice and Educate Together revealed through individual teacher perspectives. I was able to strike a balance between participation and detachment from my research subjects – the distance between myself and the teachers in this study was suitably close enough to allow “insider access” but far enough outside of the teachers’ world to prevent me from “going native” and adopting some of the values, norms and behaviours of the group even though my study was conducted as a lived enquiry and involved deeply embedding myself in my research environment (Cohen, Marmion & Morrison, 2007: p.404).

Another ethical issue that arose was the fact that the schools selected for inclusion in this research are all located in the eastern part of the island of Ireland. This was not a purposeful decision on my behalf, rather it resulted from the fact that the majority of Educate Together schools themselves are located around the Leinster region, with 109 schools in all in existence and a total of 20 situated outside of the province of Leinster¹⁰. This is because Leinster is the most populated province on the island of Ireland. Norris (2017) argues that some level of bias and partiality exists in every study. However, regarding this particular area of limitation, I believe the potential bias or impartiality is

¹⁰ Full list of Educate Together schools: <https://www.educatetogether.ie/schools>

robustly responded to through the balance and variety of the schools themselves. The schools selected for inclusion in this study represent a diverse selection of Educate Together schools within the eastern Leinster region of Ireland. This is through a mixture of newly established schools, schools which opened over fifteen years ago, a mixture of three primary schools and one secondary school, schools coming from urban, rural and suburban geographic areas and schools with varying numbers of enrolled students. Whilst bearing this limitation in mind, at the same time I have been able to create a profile of teachers' understandings of education and democracy in Irish Educate Together schools spread throughout the Leinster region of Ireland, achieved through conducting this research.

Some sources of tension exist within the notion of informed consent where the welfare of the research participants should be kept in mind at all times, namely non-maleficence (where no harm should come to research subjects) and beneficence (where there is some kind of benefit to the research subjects). In this study, non-maleficence was ensured through the absence of deception in the research design, through discussion with teachers and careful consideration of their concerns, and with interview arrangements made accordingly. In terms of beneficence, this research project aimed at articulating the perspectives of Educate Together teachers who engage in P4C practice. This may benefit these teachers by shedding light on how such practice is experienced, giving greater insight into the practice of similar teachers through comparison with their own, with an eye towards improving other classroom practices and philosophical approaches to classroom pedagogy for teachers.

In terms of my ethics protocol, research participants were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix 01) detailing explicitly and in appropriate language what participation in this research entailed. Integrity of the research was ensured by participants' right to withdraw up until one month before final

submission of the dissertation, and ensuring their protection from harm by safeguarding participant privacy and confidentiality. This began with ensuring the anonymity of the schools I researched, which presented a challenge due to the relatively large number of Educate Together schools located in the Leinster region compared with other regions on the island of Ireland. The name of each school was kept anonymous and confidential and was at no time referred to or publicised. Participants were not informed of the name or location of the other schools I visited during my research process. Participants' real names were also not used and were instead given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. Participants' written consent to be interviewed for the purposes of the research was attained before interviews began and interview data was recorded. All research data has been made anonymous and will be kept securely for 10 years in line with the University of Plymouth's current data retention policy. Research participants were debriefed through the provision of an outline of the research outcomes.

The Data

Data for this study was collected from September 2014 to September 2017, during which time I sought to locate and elicit perspectives that were both rich in description and meaning for the teachers I was alongside and which spoke to my own experience of practicing P4C in the lived school. Data was gathered from the three realms that made up the research environment: the lived school, practicing P4C and participant interviews.

Table 1: Data Gathering

Research Realm	Recorded	Experienced	Analysed
The Lived School	Field notes	Dialogue,	Reflexivity

		Conversation	
Practicing P4C – at multiple sites and in multiple modes*	Field notes	Dialogue, Participation, Observation	Reflectivity
Participant Interviews	Dictaphone	Dialogue, Face- to-face discussion	Thematic analysis

*My practice of P4C was not confined solely to the site of the lived school – I also practiced P4C at workshops and seminars related directly and indirectly to my work with Philosophy Ireland in different modes such as researcher, philosophical practitioner, participant and co-enquirer.

Since my research explored Educate Together teacher experiences of P4C practice, the choice of sampling needed to reflect the diversity and variety of teachers who engage in such practice. Participants were purposefully and conveniently sampled to explore their motivations and descriptions of how they view their practice, so that six Irish Educate Together teachers were selected to represent a cross-section of perspectives. There were an equal number of men and women teachers, two teachers from an urban school in a city, two teachers from a suburban school outside a city, one teacher from a rural school, one post-primary school teacher, and a mixture of various levels of P4C experience. This cross-section also stretched to the composition of this group of teachers and included a teaching principal, two sets of teachers working in two different schools with different levels of teaching experience and lengths of time since they qualified as teachers. Because these teachers shared the common experience of engaging with P4C, they were an appropriate purposefully

selected population for my study, and their experiences were deemed important to explore and describe (Creswell, 2013).

The Lived School

I spent the vast majority of time during the research process in the lived school. This process involved, on one hand, interviewing participants, observing teacher P4C sessions and practicing P4C myself with a class in the school. However, on the other hand, a large portion of my time there involved creating and participating in different contexts alongside the ‘other’ – dialogical encounters, conversations and exchanges *with* and *alongside* teachers and students, interacting with students and staff members on a weekly basis, and being as present as possible in a space of tolerance and acceptance that was felt throughout the school as a whole. During this time, I came to know the children and staff very well. The conversations in staffrooms, hallways and classrooms with the children and staff were pivotal to the sense that my being there ran deeper than a typical ‘insider/outsider’ researcher relationship – that there existed independently of me an atmosphere of tolerance and listening, where children were viewed as citizens, thus placing the school centrally within my research and my P4C practice. The school itself was a fifteen minute drive from where I lived. This combined with the fact that the principal of the school was the second supervisor for my thesis meant that I was able to be a frequent visitor to the school. Several members of staff lived in the same area as I did and I became very friendly with several of them. In Sept. 2017 a place on the school’s board of management became available and I was asked to join. The decision to locate my lived enquiry in this environment was a logical one – I was already a regular visitor to the school to conduct my P4C practice and to meet with a supervisor of my research. As my research unfolded, taking the form of a lived enquiry, the lived school came to be located at the heart of my research. As discussed in the *Ethical Protocol, Issues and Dilemmas* section above, I was

able to remain detached enough from my research subjects to enable ‘insider access’ without ‘going native’. Up until the research data was gathered, I only visited the lived school on days when I was conducting P4C sessions with a class. I did not meet participants outside of school hours and socialised mainly with teachers that were not participants in the study only after the interviews were conducted.

Throughout my research journey, there was a sincere and determined effort and desire to be *alongside* the staff and students. This was not merely participating and dialoging with them regularly, but the forging of relationships based on shared beliefs in the value of education for and through democracy where children are central. By approaching my research in this way and creating relationships, ideas could be aired and exposed to criticism and insight from peers and those with wider educational experience. I became privy to and part of multiple discussions about on-going issues within the school – professional conversations that, in the beginning, would have been between school staff only, but after a while I was invited to join and participate in. These discussions came to be rich encounters that reflected how embedded I became in the school, discussions which became much deeper and edifying experiences than I imagined when I first entered the school. These encounters were extremely topical *at the time*, such as, for example, the student council, issues of disadvantage, the value of Educate Together principles, anti-racism policies, anti-bullying procedures, human rights, issues raised by parents, school-leadership, the seasonality of the school year (including days when the school timetable was suspended), and conversations with teachers about their careers and personal journeys. As well as these, there were other discussions with teachers and staff related to my research, such as current readings I was studying, my SAPERE training, issues and events related to my work with Philosophy Ireland, and sharing personal biographies and school experiences

with one another. These were things that were topical during the time I was present in the school that I both joined and initiated, and which became part of the process by which the children and the adults engaged with one another. The interrelationship between the development of my P4C practice and my presence in the lived school meant I became aware of an emerging connection between philosophy, education and democracy. This dialogical element underlies many of the friendships, professional and personal relationships, and the connections with people and groups formed throughout the research reaching beyond contexts confined to personal P4C practice and the lived school. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Three, my involvement in co-founding Philosophy Ireland came about from my desire to encounter and dialogue with others about the practical application of philosophy. Heron and Reason (1997) assert that to “experience anything is to participate in it, and to participate is both to mould and to encounter” (p.277). Actively participating in my own search for meaning locates the self in the experience of the world, standing in contrast to discovery based on individual intellectual efforts alone.

Listening was of particular importance during my time in the lived school. I listened carefully, not just to the interview participants, but to the students and staff that I encountered and engaged with a view to understanding what they were saying and what they meant, rather than as a polite way to patiently wait my turn to talk. I wanted to understand what was meaningful to them about P4C and they recognized this intent. In terms of the interview participants, each participant was assured that they were being heard, that their insights and responses were appreciated and of real significance to me and the research project. Through listening carefully like this, there are echoes of Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) idea of “deploying the self” (p.74) when accessing people and perspectives, which they believed helped in the building of relationships and sustaining reciprocity with the teachers in their study.

Practicing P4C

I began practicing P4C with a group of fourth class (9-10 year old) students and continued with this same class for three years from September 2014 until the end of the school term in June 2017 when this same group of students graduated from primary school. I prepared a weekly P4C session according to what I felt the class as a whole wanted to discuss; oftentimes I would seek suggestions from the children and ask them what they would like to discuss for the next session. On other occasions, I would liaise with their teacher about what kind of topics they were learning to see if I could find a stimulus for philosophical discussion that was related to their everyday classroom studies. Their teacher would always discuss with me if there had been any incidents that any of the students had been involved in, or how the class as a whole was getting along since the previous week. I found that an open and engaging relationship with the class teacher deepened my relationship with the children and helped me to broaden my understanding of my practice and P4C in general.

Informal observation was a key part of my P4C practice and my impressions of the sessions were written about in research journal entries (see Appendix 04). Whereas semi-structured interviews allowed me to respond and delve further into respondents' answers and replies in order to uncover teachers' descriptions of their P4C experiences, observations enabled me to understand and describe existing situations (Erlandson et al., 1993). By observing other practitioners engaging in their practice, I was able to compare and reflect on my own practice and construct meaning as my enquiry unfolded. My observation entailed sitting in on teachers' P4C sessions, joining the discussion and taking part in activities, and observing the teacher's facilitation of the children's discussion. In particular, I paid close attention to how teachers might have embraced and engaged with issues connected to childhood and children's voice.

Such issues are not only central to P4C, they also overlap with the Educate Together movement who claim ‘child-centeredness’ and ethical education as key components in their educational ethos and strategy (Educate Together, 2012).

As discussed in Chapter Two, Dunne (2006) conceives “the child” as excluded from the context of relationships, and stresses speech, children's “voice” and adults’ close rapport with children to facilitate them in being “active protagonists in their own learning” to bring about a conception of citizenship where human interdependencies are acknowledged and brought into the open (p.15). Observing how teachers embrace children’s voices and address the “epistemic injustice” (Murriss, 2013: p.245) of adults’ non-recognition of children as knowers through their P4C practice, valuable insight into teacher understandings of how they view their practice can be revealed. Here, I take Higgins’ (2011) and Dunne’s (2005) view on teaching as a practice constituting an ethical dimension – to move towards an engagement with children’s voices must involve a type of self-regard that teachers deem ethically desirable to foster in their students. This entails conceptualising endeavours like P4C as a *practice*, one that contains an ethical undercurrent at its heart.

By observing teachers engaging in P4C in the familiar setting of their classrooms, I was able to learn about the different activities, nuances and interactions in an open and non-judgemental way. Observing teachers enabled me to gain a fuller picture of the community aspect of practicing P4C, a way of thinking about and approaching P4C that I could compare with my own journey into the field, providing a fruitful ground upon which the interviews could be carried out and participants’ perspectives explored. This aligns with what Morrison (1993) says about observations – by “being immersed in a particular context over time not only will the salient features of the situation emerge and present themselves but a more holistic view will be gathered of the

interrelationships of factors” (p.88, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: p.405). During the time I spent practicing P4C in the lived school, I initially used SAPERE’s recommended ten step sequence of enquiry as part of my own development as a P4C practitioner. Having spent a considerable amount of time amongst the participants of this study, visiting and being present in their schools and in their classes, I became drawn to approaches that focused on dialogue with and listening to children – approaches based on the idea of P4C as providing opportunities for philosophical encounters with children. I observed this kind of approach to P4C in the lived school and elements of it in some of the other schools I visited throughout my research journey, where the ethos of the school and the Educate Together movement itself informed participants’ P4C practice. This approach is given a full and detailed examination in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Participant Interviews

Dialogue played a crucial part in this research. Dialogue here is understood normatively; it is viewed differently than, for example, discussion or debate, as more than mere conversation. In dialogue, there is an underlying commitment to enquiry rather than, in the case of debate, producing a winner or convincing somebody of one’s argument (Chesters, 2012). Lipman (2003) asserted that the motivation for initiating talking itself as *the* factor that separates dialogue from mere conversation, arguing that a conversation revolves around “generating equilibrium amongst participants” while dialogue aims at “disequilibrium, in the hope of gaining new understandings of the topic under discussion, and perhaps (but not necessarily) restoring equilibrium again at the end” (p.87). Although participant interviews for this research were not ‘dialogic’ in format, I had several hours of dialogue with each participant in the lead up to their interview where I had gotten to know them, learnt about their outlooks in education and democracy, and established a friendly relationship

several weeks before the interview was carried out. I relate this experience in more detail when I describe and explain the interview participants' backgrounds in Chapter Five of this thesis. Besides dialogue, there was an important embodiment and personification element to the interviews reflective of the fact that I as researcher was sitting down and conducting an interview with teachers I had come to know. In some ways these interviews were a kind of peak, a high point of the social relationship built with each teacher. They were carried out face-to-face in a room with only myself and the participant for the purpose of providing data for my research. This embodiment added to the trust and reciprocity of the social relationships central to my study.

In February 2016, I conducted a pilot interview with Jemma, one of the six teachers who participated in this study (see Appendix 05). The pilot interview took place in a small room in a quieter part of the lived school after the school day had finished. The interview lasted about 45mins, the aim of which was to explore and establish the interview questions that would be used for data collection and to trial run an interview with a research participant. This was with a view to informing the chosen research design methods. Questions were constructed in such a way as to focus on three separate areas of interest for my research – personal P4C practice, P4C pedagogy and the role of a teacher, and wider educational and democratic outlooks. Originally, I had created seventeen interview questions, however on reflection and in preparation for the pilot interview they were reduced to eight (see Appendix 3).

Upon completion of the pilot interview, certain issues came to light regarding the design of the research questions. It was my intention that participant interviews would take a 'dialogic' format so that the interview structure would seek agreement and disagreement, equilibrium and disequilibrium, aiming at a deeper understanding central to a philosophical enquiry study. However, after considering this format for the pilot interview, I

realised that a dialogic interview structure was not the most suitable means to explore a teacher's perspective of their P4C practice. Reflexively, I was aware of my background as an unqualified teacher, P4C practitioner and philosophy graduate. This would have unintentionally influenced my dialogic outlook in an interview setting and impact upon the emergent and organic character of teachers' dialogic speech relating to their P4C practice. By considering the unarticulated nature and importance of teachers' own thick descriptions in such interviews and thinking reflexively about my own situatedness, I decided that using semi-structured interview questions would be more appropriate to gain the necessary insight into this emergent and organic character. As a result of this, participant interview questions were further reduced in number and kept in an open-ended semi-structured format. There was also a shift in the different areas of research interest to include the idea of children's voices. The final outcome of this pilot interview that would eventually be put to participants consisted of six semi-structured interview questions in all, two of each pertaining to three different areas of interest for my research (see Appendix 03).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), interviews can be regarded as an "interpersonal encounter, with all that this entails" (p.355). The style of the interview questions I created for this study were informed by Kvale's (1996) belief that interviews should, amongst other things, adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena and focus on specific ideas and themes. Participant interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes in length. The semi-structured design enabled open-ended discussion guided by the responses of the participants with the aim of discovering teacher/practitioner experiences of conducting P4C sessions. As Kvale (2008) notes, it was the variability rather than the commonality of the responses that was sought through a semi-structured interview format by having "conversations where the outcome is a coproduction of the interviewer and the subject (p.xvii)". I chose a semi-

structured interview format particularly because of its suitability with practitioner research – not only because semi-structured interviews aim to explore the in-depth experiences of participants and the meanings they attribute to them, but because of the ethical context associated with professional practice, where educational practitioners work with children within school communities. For practitioner researcher participants, a semi-structured interview allows them to move the course of the interview in the direction that their practitioner knowledge brings them. The result of this is that rather than the interviewer bringing the participant on a journey of knowledge discovery, participants can bring the researcher on a knowledge journey. A specific focus of the interviews was to elicit as deep a discussion as possible on the perspectives that such a practice may have on both the development of the role and educational values of teachers and practitioners of P4C in Educate Together schools. Interview transcripts of participants' responses to the semi-structured interview questions are can be seen in Appendix 07.

Data Analysis

As discussed previously, this study originally took the form of a lived Deweyan enquiry. Dewey's social aspect of enquiry was retained through the livedness of this study, constituted by the dialogues and exchanges I had with teachers and practitioners, which I attempted to weave into the analysis process. The data collected for this research was analysed in three different ways according to how each realm of the research was experienced. This was reflexively, reflectively and by means of thematic analysis. A selection of these analyses can be seen in Appendix 06. The research data gathered from practicing P4C and being present in the lived school was analysed through reflexive and reflective means, while teacher interview transcripts were analysed through thematic analysis. Through interpretation of the summary analysis, a connection between participants' articulation of their experiences

practicing P4C and the research question was established in order to develop an underlying structure of meaning from which to build my research argument.

The decision to use thematic analytic research methods for teacher interviews was due to the fact that my interview strategy shifted from a dialogic one to a semi-structured one after the pilot interview. Inspiration for analysing the data thematically was drawn from Strauss' (1987) guidelines for open coding, where the researcher should: i) ask the data a specific set of questions; ii) analyse the data minutely; iii) frequently interrupt coding to write a theoretical note; iv) don't assume the analytical relevance of any traditional variables such as sex, age, or socio-economic status. My thematic analytical strategy is presented in further detail in Chapter Five of this thesis. The role of reflexivity and reflectivity as part of the analysis of my data are examined here.

Throughout my research journey I encountered and engaged with countless people, many of them teachers and, generally speaking, Educate Together teachers. When entering into each dialogue I maintained a self-awareness of the world in which I was coming from and the various forces affecting that world – my philosophy graduate background, my activism with other philosophy graduates, my unsatisfied experience of studying philosophy. By paying attention to the forces that have shaped my backgrounds, experiences and worldview, in short my research 'agenda', during these dialogical encounters, the specific filters for the perspectives I sought could be determined (Palaganas, 2017). Jootun, McGhee and Marland (2009) consider the key to reflexivity to lie in "mak[ing] the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit" (p.45), ultimately "increase[ing] the rigour of the research process" (p.1).

This reflexivity was, in a general sense, a part of my analysis – it was active throughout the research process as continuous introspection on my values

and how those values affected decisions about my research as it unfolded. These values were constantly being thrown into the spotlight each time I entered into a dialogue with a teacher, about which being reflexive enhanced and enriched the dialogic exchanges with participants by challenging both mine and their perspectives and assumptions about shared values (Palaganas, 2017). In the vast majority of these dialogic exchanges and encounters values related almost exclusively to education and democracy generally, and how these values might be enacted in an Educate Together setting specifically.

Reflexivity in my research informed my approach to analysing data by focusing attention on the inter-relationship between myself as researcher and the participants with whom I was alongside, and on the dynamic within the social relations pivotal to the research. Being reflexive in this way essentially revealed how I thought about my involvement in my research – the influence I had on the things searched for and acted upon during the research process.

As I elucidated earlier in this chapter, a journal kept throughout the research process was originally planned as a *reflective* journal, but which in effect turned out to be a collection of field notes. This meant that reflectivity took place elsewhere, in a place different from where it was anticipated to occur. Reflection in my research followed Dewey's idea that reflection is connected with experience and learning – new insights are discovered when an experience undergoes a “quality leap” into reflection (Berding, 1997). By cultivating reflection, experience and learning transform into thinking – a deliberate effort to discover specific connections between an action and the resulting consequences of that action, becoming continuous. The conclusive end of thinking we may call knowledge, a tentative outcome used in future enquiries (Harris, 2014).

Reflection during my study was key to understanding the many deep discussions, impromptu conversations and dialogic exchanges that I had with teachers, staff, colleagues and others. Reflectivity here occurred recursively, during and after a dialogic encounter that informed and was brought with me into the next encounter, ultimately aiming at furthering a mutual understanding of P4C practice in Educate Together schools. Being reflective in this way also informed how I approached analysing data for my research – I wanted to make sure that the nuances and sense of democracy as a value revealed to me when in the presence of the participants was also present during the analysis of the data collected for my research. By reflecting upon each dialogical encounter, both during and after the fact, and recursively bringing each nugget of perspective and insight into new and fresh encounters, the context within which I conducted my analysis was deeply informed and diversified by this type of reflection done in the field. I would think back upon what underlying motivation and meaning drove each encounter, what each dialogue pointed to philosophically in terms of the idea of P4C in an Educate Together environment, and bring the ideas and postulates gained from this activity with me into the next potential encounter. Reflectivity in this way was possible because of the social relations developed that proved pivotal to my research, consistent with Dewey's conception of enquiry as experiential sense-making, where “one attempts to elicit another's help in going beyond his or her own present understanding” (Lindfor, 1999 in Hedges and Cooper, 2014: p.3).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the philosophical underpinnings of the methodological approach taken for my study, which I have called ‘lived enquiry’. Methodology for this research is viewed as a means of uncovering and justifying my research assumptions, and “in so doing to locate the claims which

the research makes within the traditions of enquiry which use it” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012: p.38-39). The framework of lived enquiry was presented through the concept of ‘livedness’, where I as researcher immersed myself in my research environment as deeply as possible, resulting in my position within the research becoming that of an ‘embedded extern’. Central to my lived enquiry framework was the notion of transformation, a shift that takes place within the researcher in terms of how they view their relationship with their research during the research process and how that research will be used after the process has ended. Dewey’s social aspect of enquiry is key to lived enquiry, and was central to the creation of social relations that this study utilised to allow Irish Educate Together teacher perspectives on their P4C practice to emerge. Finally, the decisions around the selection of appropriate methods for this framework were discussed and the contexts within which these decisions were made were presented. The following chapter will explore how data gathered through my lived enquiry framework was analysed and how ideas and conceptions of philosophy, P4C and children, education and democracy, and the world of teaching, teachers and the school emerged through the perspectives of those actively engaged in their practice within one or several of these realms.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Tuning in to Emerging Voices in my Data

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with six teachers over a period of seven months. Key to the data analysis process was tuning my ear to participants' voices as they emerged from the interviews.

This study examined the lived perspectives of P4C practice in Irish Educate Together schools in order to see what insights could be gained into teachers' understandings of the relationship between education and democracy. Four schools were involved in this research where the six interview participants work. In this chapter, the schools involved are briefly described, with one school in particular featuring prominently. As discussed in the methodology chapter, this school was the 'lived school', where I practised P4C for three years and established a deep relationship of trust, respect and friendship with the children and staff. I offer a more detailed explanation of this school before presenting profiles of each of the participants and their respective schools. The thematic analytical process is discussed before I present my interpretation of participants' responses. By conducting a thematic analysis of the interviews, there emerged several insightful exchanges and discerning points, which I identify as salient with respect to education and democracy in Ireland.

The Educate Together Schools Where the Research Took Place

The teachers interviewed for this research taught in four different schools spread throughout the eastern province of Leinster in the Republic of Ireland.

Two schools were in a suburban area, one of which was a second level school. The other two schools were in a semi-rural and an urban setting respectively. The lived school is where I practised P4C with one of the classes for a duration of three years and within which I was immersed most deeply as researcher. I did not spend as much time in the other schools as I did in the lived school, usually only visiting the others once or twice in order to meet and discuss with participants, observe their P4C practice or facilitate a P4C session with a participant's class, and conduct an interview with them.

Although each school is significant in terms of participants' experiences and educational views, it was in the lived school that relationships were forged and where I, as an outside researcher coming into the school to interact with and observe the children and staff, was made to feel most welcome. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the principal of the school was the second supervisor of my doctoral research, as well as the significant amount of time I spent in the school itself. However, throughout the course of my time researching, interacting and practicing P4C, my relationships with the children, teachers and the school itself grew exponentially, and continues to grow today. Further descriptions of these schools are contained in participants' background descriptions, in order to do justice to how school ethos affects the teachers featured in this research, adding further context to the richness of description that I sought. The six interview participants were teachers at the four schools mentioned above, with the schools themselves located in urban, suburban or semi-rural areas of low to medium socioeconomic status.

The 'Lived' School

Over the course of the research process I was present in the lived school on a regular basis. This process did not just involve interviewing participants, observing teacher P4C sessions and practicing P4C myself with a class in the

school, but also involved encounters in other contexts by engaging in dialogical conversations and exchanges with teachers, interacting with students and staff members on a weekly basis, and generally being present in an accepting and tolerant space within the school as a whole. I began practicing P4C with a group of fourth class (9-10 year olds) students once a week for between one and two hours and continued with this same class for three years from September 2014 until the end of the school term in June 2017 when the students graduated from primary school. During this time, I got to know the children and staff very well indeed.

I prepared a weekly P4C session according to what I felt the children in the class wanted to discuss; oftentimes I would seek suggestions from the children and ask them what they would like to discuss for next week. On other occasions, I would liaise with their teacher about what kind of topics they were learning to see if I could find a stimulus for philosophical discussion that was related to their everyday classroom studies. Their teacher would always discuss with me if there were any significant experiences that any of the students had, or how the class as a whole was getting along since the previous week. I found that an open and engaging relationship with the class teacher deepened my relationship with the children and helped me to broaden my understandings of P4C. The conversations in staffrooms, hallways and classrooms with the staff were pivotal to my sense that the fact of my being there ran deeper than a typical insider/outsider research relationship – that there existed independently of me an atmosphere of tolerance and listening and where children are viewed as citizens, placing the school centrally within my research and my P4C practice.

The Educate Together school in question is a designated DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Band 1 school (Weir and Denner, 2013) in a suburban area. A 2011 Central Statistics Office area profile

reported that the area in question had almost twice the national average of non-Irish nationals living there, with an unemployment rate of 22.8 per cent compared to a national average rate of 19.0. The school has been in existence since the mid-2000s, and was formed by securing support from parents and other stakeholders seeking an alternative to denominational primary education, the only primary schools available within the area at that time being Roman Catholic denominational primary schools. The assistance of Educate Together was sought in order to facilitate the formation process and to act as patron of the school. In the meantime, the town where the school is situated began to change dramatically, with the population swelling from circa 5000 people to 13,000 people, coinciding with the associated expanse of affordable housing. The local town also saw growth in immigrant populations, due to an immigration reception centre located outside of the town. What initially began with a group of largely middle class white Irish parents in the locale desiring an educational alternative to what was available soon metamorphosed into a scenario where the school became a focal point of interest to a much broader range of the community, as it tried to establish the school within a period of rapid cultural change that was taking place (McCutcheon, 2017). By the time the school opened its doors, the first student cohort was largely composed of an immigrant population. Some of the committee members that campaigned for the school expressed concern about how changes to the composition of the school intake could impact upon the 'original vision' of the school, in terms of their white Irish children being in a minority due to the rapid demographic changes taking place within the area (McCutcheon, 2017). Simultaneously, the local Catholic denominational schools, which had heretofore catered for immigrant students via normal enrolment procedures, began to enact a 'Catholic first' student enrolment policy because of the growing pressure on school places due to the growth in Catholic and general population of school age children moving to the area.

Nowadays, the school has thirty-five teachers teaching 402 students. The composition of the school intake is around 30 per cent white Irish students with a Catholic background, whose parents specifically chose to send their children to an Educate Together school; 30 per cent children from Near Eastern countries with a Muslim background, whose parents elected to send their children to an Educate Together school over any of the denominated schools in the area; and 30 per cent comprising other Christian students from African countries like Nigeria and the Congo. A further 10 per cent come from smaller ethnic and faith minorities alongside other non-ethnic factors such as children whose parents specifically believe in the inclusive and/or democratic nature of the school's origin and ethos (McCutcheon, 2017).

Interview Participant Backgrounds

Participant profiles are presented here in the order that the interviews were conducted. The interviews took place in a disused or quiet room after school hours or during school hours when a participant had a free period. The participants were informed in advance about how many questions would be asked during the interview, how long it was expected interviews would last and examples of the type of questions they might be asked. However, they were not given copies of the interview questions before of the interviews themselves. This was to ensure that the conversation could flow freely during the interview, allowing participants to respond and elaborate as naturally as possible and for me as researcher to remain flexible enough to follow any interesting developments in the discussion (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). I wanted to hear participants articulating in their own words their views on their P4C practice at that moment and how they saw and understood education and democracy and the relationship between them based on their own experiences and beliefs. This does not amount to 'putting someone on the spot' in the hope that they would

unwittingly reveal some deeper insight that they may otherwise be reluctant to reveal. Rather, it was an attempt to listen to what was genuinely important to them as Educate Together teachers in a non-invasive way, based on what they thought at that time and how they chose to articulate what they felt, without perhaps having read something that would be fresh in their mind to bring into the interview or having prepared a reading to which they would refer to during interview.

Declan (not real name), Educate Together national school, (urban area):

Declan is in his early to mid-forties and is a teaching principal of an Educate Together primary school in an urban area. He is a very friendly and open character. When I arrived at his school to observe and participate in his P4C session, he was singing and playing the guitar at school assembly in the gymnasium in front of all the students and teachers sitting on the floor. The school was divested by the Irish government from the Catholic Church and leases out an old Christian Brothers school building that was built several decades ago.

Over the course of my data collection I noticed that many of the Educate Together school buildings are very similar in design – usually square modular-looking buildings painted mostly white, with a series of grey sloped roofs and one or two large sections painted a bright vibrant colour, like green or yellow. I sometimes would play a game with myself by trying to tell whether or not a particular school building was an Educate Together school as I drove from place to place in my car. The building where Declan's school is located lies in stark contrast to what I thought I could recognise about an Educate Together school. It is a large concrete building in an economically disadvantaged area surrounded by walls with barbed wire on top. Walking to the school, I was struck by the disadvantage of the area and how, from my perspective as an outsider coming to

visit, it seemed amazing to me that a school might find a place here. Inside there were big high corridors that add to what I thought was an unmistakable sanitized ‘hospital’ feel to the building, which the teachers, children and staff have tried to dissipate through adding some warmth and colour to the concrete hallways by covering the walls in pictures, art posters and messages made by the children. I joked with Declan as he showed me around the school that he and his school would be very safe here in the event of a nuclear fallout, due to the thick concrete walls around the school. He told me that the original Christian Brothers school that had existed there before the Educate Together school took over the premises was exactly the kind of school he would have attended when he was a primary school student. Within its first year of opening the school underwent a Whole School Evaluation (WSE)¹¹, which Declan had no hesitation in telling me he was very unhappy about. According to him, WSEs happen on average once every seven or eight years and for a new school to be evaluated in their first year was unheard of, and something that made him suspicious. There were about six or seven teachers in the school when I visited and year groups have been combined to form class sizes of between 22 and 26 students. Declan teaches a class of first, second and third class children (ages 6-7, 7-8 and 8-9 years old) in tandem with his principal duties. I sat in on a philosophy session he conducted with his class where the topic of ‘feelings’ was discussed, before our interview took place in his office. He was very jovial, both throughout our interview and as he spoke to me as I accompanied him around the school where he spoke very openly about his experiences. During the interview, he occasionally struggled to articulate or find the words he wanted in answer to some of the questions I put to him, perhaps out of nervousness or having to think ‘on the spot’. He took great pride in showing me

¹¹ Whole School Evaluation: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/>

around the school and showed me a small freestanding bookshelf he brought into the staff room. It was full of children's books with separate folders attached containing sheets he had printed and filled with questions to ask and ideas for discussion for fellow teachers to use in their own classrooms. He was keen to emphasise that philosophy was something he expressly wanted to bring into the school under his charge as an essential part of the identity of that school.

Aiden (not real name), Educate Together national school, (urban area):

Aiden is in his early to mid-thirties and is a teacher in the same Educate Together primary school as Declan. Declan actively supports the teachers in his school to engage in P4C and Aiden only recently began the practice, having previously facilitated two or three sessions with his class that school year. Aiden is a softly spoken individual with a warm and friendly character and invited me to sit in on and observe a P4C session that he facilitated with his class. I was glad he did so as it gave me a great opportunity to see someone who, like myself a year previously, was starting out with their P4C practice. During Aiden's session the children were relaxed and happy and Aiden posed the question "which comes first, a chicken or an egg?", which they all took turns to give their thoughts on. Some passed on the opportunity to speak and others took their time to say what they wanted to say, while others listened and shifted on their seats, that were arranged in a circle. As I sat in the circle they were hesitant about whether they should pass the speaking object (in this case a large purple crayon) to me, wondering no doubt whether I was a teacher or a participant in their circle. Aiden followed a loose structure similar to other P4C sessions I had observed previously, such as the use of a speaking object, and a 'turn taking' system for deciding who should speak next. It occurred to me that his style of P4C was very similar to another session I had observed in the lived school that encouraged children to speak freely one by one on a given topic with minimal guidance or input from the teacher, who would instead listen carefully

as the children spoke their mind and gave their views. In our conversation leading up to the interview, Aiden admitted that he was nervous about his level of knowledge about P4C and was worried he would not be able to provide much insight or conduct a good interview. I had to reassure him that I was delighted to have a chance to interview someone who was just beginning their practice. He told me that he had encountered philosophy with children during his student teacher days and was sceptical back then about how a subject that was so ‘hard to pin down’ could be introduced to the classroom. However, he said that when he began teaching in his current Educate Together school, and with Declan’s encouragement, he saw the idea of philosophy in classrooms in a different light and was eager to explore it more deeply.

Joan (not real name), Educate Together secondary school, (suburban area):

Joan is a teacher in her early forties and teaches history and Irish in a co-educational and multi-denominational secondary school that has a shared patronage of Educate Together and the local Educational Training Board. When the school first opened there were about 150 students enrolled in two year groups – first years (12-13 years old) and second years (13-14 years old). The school was built to accommodate 1000 students, but because it has not been open very long there is a number of rooms without any students and a quietness is felt that one may not normally associate with a school when one walks around. The school is quite close to where I live and I decided to walk the thirty-minute journey to the school as it was a very warm sunny day. The freshness and cleanliness of the school are unmistakable due to the school having opened in recent years and there was still a faint smell of fresh paint and new furniture in the air when I waited in the reception area for Joan. I got a distinct feeling of youthfulness as I strained to hear the voices of children and instruction in distant classrooms. I had arrived early as Joan had invited me to observe a lesson she was teaching to her first year students. I met Joan at the

same Educate Together conference where I met Merriam, another research participant. Joan and Dr Philomena Donnelly were giving a presentation about P4C in secondary schools. She was approached by Dr Donnelly as part of a research project that involved both of them facilitating six P4C (also known as ‘Thinking Time’) sessions over a period of six weeks, the results of which were presented at the conference. After their presentation, I got chatting with Joan and asked her if she would be a participant in my research to which she kindly agreed. In our discussions before I came to her school to conduct the interview with her, she invited me to observe her teaching a first year Ethics lesson. After her experience of Dr Donnelly’s research, Joan told me she and a few colleagues decided to create an Ethics course for first and second year students inspired by the discursive nature of P4C pedagogies. The lesson I observed focused on diversity and inclusion. Joan posed many questions to her class for them to work on in separate groups. Through Joan’s prompting, the students discussed with each other some of the ideas and implications raised by these questions. Joan told me that the idea behind the Ethics lessons was that students would be able to create their own portfolios that they would keep and work on year by year to chart their journey into becoming ethical citizens and how they thought about ethical dilemmas. After the ethics lesson, Joan had to spend some time with a drama group that was visiting the school that day, so I joined some of the teachers at the school for tea in the staff room. I remember feeling slightly old as I sat down beside some of them and struck up a conversation – nearly all of the teachers were quite young, aged perhaps in their early twenties, most of whom were student teachers and were fulfilling the teaching practice aspect of their Professional Masters of Education degree. There was a very jovial atmosphere in the room on a warm Friday afternoon as people made plans for the weekend. I got chatting to a young woman completing her teaching practice in the school who was very interested in the idea of philosophy in classrooms. She related how different the experience of her teaching practice in

this school was to her own experience of secondary school. From what I could gauge, this experience centred on discursiveness in the classroom – she loved the way that the students in her class were curious and wanted to discuss different things collectively with her, which was not an option for her when she was a secondary school student. This got us talking more generally about increased engagement and discussion about wider cultural traditions ingrained in Irish society. Laughingly, she told me that she would have a ‘real battle’ on her hands if she expressed a view about certain cultural traditions that went against what her grandmother believed. When Joan came back from her other teaching commitments, I conducted an interview with her in one of the unused meeting rooms in the school. She spoke in a very balanced and considered way about her experience of the research she had done with Dr Donnelly and how she saw P4C influencing her ideas of teaching and her decision to create an Ethics course in her school. She emphasised the challenge she believed P4C presented to teachers.

Merriam (not real name), Educate Together national school, (semi-rural area):

Merriam is in her late thirties and teaches a class of Senior Infants (5-6 years old) at an Educate Together primary school. I first met Merriam at the same Educate Together conference where I met Joan. We got chatting and she kindly agreed to participate in my study. I met up with her some months later before the interview to discuss and arrange a visit to her school for the interview. She told me she had studied philosophy at university, before attending teacher training college, and we both seemed to have a similarly dissatisfying experience of the subject. We also discussed our wider views on education and I found that we shared a wide variety of opinions with regard to education and Irish society. Merriam is the only participant in the study who studied philosophy formally. She struck me as a deeply thoughtful person who was interested in rediscovering a relationship with the aspects of philosophy

that she enjoyed and found meaningful throughout her life. She told me she had read about philosophy in classrooms and had been interested in the idea of philosophy for children for some time, but that she had not yet had the chance to introduce it to her class. I drove to her school on the day we had arranged for me to facilitate a session with her class and to conduct the interview. She said that she would not be comfortable with me visiting and observing her facilitate what would be her first ever P4C session, so I suggested that I would conduct a session with her class which she could observe, which she was agreeable to. I asked her if there were any other teachers in the school that might be interested in observing the session, but she told me that she was the only person in her school interested in P4C. She told me that the principal of the school, although very supportive and encouraging of his teachers, was happy to let teachers work away by themselves when it came to them exploring and developing their individual teaching practice and would only visit them in their classrooms occasionally. Conducting a P4C session with her class was the first time I had practiced with such a young group and I brought animal finger puppets for everyone as part of my stimulus. Some children had the same animals, but most had different ones. I asked them questions such as “Which animal do you think is fierce?”, “Why do you think it is fierce?”, “Can animals that are fierce and animals that are not fierce ever be friends?” etc., asking them to think about their answers and seeing if they would like to change them as they took turns one by one to speak and answer these questions. Whenever someone asked me what a word meant I usually asked if there was anyone else who knew and if they could tell the others what it meant. Throughout this session, Merriam sat just outside the circle writing notes and observing. When the session was over, Merriam had scheduled some Aistear (Irish learning through play programme) time where the children were building their own spacecraft out of recyclable material and I joined them. A few of the children took great pride in telling me their cultural heritage – one girl’s father was from France, another boy was born

in Poland, but had lived in Ireland for four years. One girl wanted to know where I was from, because she had not heard my name before.

After the Aistear period, I joined Merriam in the schoolyard for Short break as she was on yard duty. I was amazing to see some of the older students in the school, probably 5th (10-11 years old) or 6th (11-12 years old) class students, usually girls, helping out during short break. They joined them playing some outdoor games, skipping and playing with a football and acted as mediators whenever there were any squabbles over toys or if someone was upset with somebody else. I asked Merriam about this and she told me the older students asked if they could help with supervision for younger classes during break times, which she and the other staff and school principal were happy to accommodate. Merriam asked me questions about the more practical aspects of my facilitation as I accompanied her during yard duty. After this short break, I conducted the interview with Merriam in a small quiet room in another part of the school. During our interview, like with Declan, she was occasionally puzzled when thinking about a response, something I considered to be a natural part of the interview process. She referred back to what she had observed from the session I did with her class and seemed eager to start her own P4C practice at the beginning of the next school year.

John (not real name), Educate Together national school, lived school (suburban area):

John is a primary school teacher in his early 40s in the lived school at the heart of the study. I conducted an interview with John in a hotel that was roughly midway between where both of us lived. This was to accommodate the fact that the end of the school year was fast approaching by the time we were both able to arrange a time and date where we could meet up. The school was a hive of activity, and the possibility of finding a quiet room to conduct the

interview was increasingly unlikely. On arriving for the interview, John told me that he had received some tragic news involving the teenage son of an old childhood friend of his that currently lives in the US. The boy had taken his own life because of being bullied in school a day or two previously and John had only found out that morning. We spent several minutes discussing the impact of this news, during which time I tried to gauge whether John really wanted to be interviewed at that time. He assured me he did and our discussion moved towards issues affecting young people and the pressures they face, setting the scene for a very thoughtful and reflective interview. I had observed John's Thinking Time sessions on several occasions two years previously, when I was just beginning my own P4C practice. He told me he has been practicing 'philosophy' or 'Thinking Time' since 2008 and I had been struck by how intuitive his sessions were. In his P4C practice, topics for discussion are usually chosen by the students through their discussion in normal curriculum classes. Time is then set aside to discuss the topic that "popped" up and children form a circle with their tables and chairs in the middle of their classroom. There is a definite sense of the organic feel and flow of the discussions that follow, where the students listen and share their views respectfully and attentively. This is modelled by John, who provides the space, both physical and metaphorical, for openness, listening and sharing.

Observing John's sessions was my first introduction to philosophy with children. Being part of the enquiries and sitting in a circle amongst his class for those first couple of weeks helped me realise how 'affecting' (see Chapter Three, p.105) P4C practice can be for the teacher and impressed upon me the value of creating opportunities to philosophise with children. Our conversation about the tragedy before the interview moved firstly from the specific to the general and then to the philosophical. The mood set by the conversation took a certain urgency that did not dwell on the senselessness or existentialism of the

tragedy. Instead, it helped create a tone of personal responsibility, equality and social justice, which John spoke about with a spiritedness throughout the interview that followed. It dawned on me that in nearly all of my interactions with John, a sense of spiritedness towards equality and sharing permeated everything that he spoke about. The interview with him was a different kind of conversation that I have had discussing similar topics with other people in the past – there was a determination towards meaning in the wake of something so tragic and meaningless. I was worried about discussing something so sensitive and raw, not knowing where it might lead, but John’s honesty and openness allowed our discussion to move towards meaningfulness. The conversation that preceded the interview was similar in a lot of respects to the many exchanges and dialogues I had with John in the past and contained the same spirit of meaningfulness and reflectivity. I commenced the interview when I felt this part of the conversation came to a natural close.

Jemma (not real name), Educate Together national school, lived school (suburban area):

Jemma is a primary school teacher in her mid-20s who teaches at the lived school at the heart of this study. I met Jemma through my own personal P4C practice in the lived school, observing several of her P4C sessions and discussing her Master’s research with her throughout the period of her studies. Jemma was doing a Masters of Education focusing on the use of picturebooks in her P4C sessions with her Senior Infant (5-6 years old) class. My original pilot interview was with Jemma and the results of that pilot helped to form the questions and interview design of the semi-structured questions later during the data collection phase. I offered advice and critical friendship throughout Jemma’s studies, reading and critiquing some of her writing and research outlines. I also sat in on and observed several of Jemma’s P4C sessions with her own class. She used picturebooks as stimuli and would often pose an open-

ended question to the children, passing around a teddy bear as a speaking object. The children spoke one by one, waiting for the bear to be passed round to take their turn to talk. I remember feeling very inspired during one particular exchange where the bear arrived at a young girl for whom English was not a first language but nonetheless wanted to give her view on a particular question. She spoke with confidence but I was unable to understand what she said and to my ear it seemed like she spoke in a different language, but with the same intonations and accents of English. After she had said what she wanted to say and passed the bear to her neighbour, Jemma interpreted what she said. It struck me how well she knew the girl's characteristic speech, how often she must have listened to the girl, how much she must have tried to understand her by giving her the opportunity to speak, thinking about her and what she was trying to say. It really impressed upon me how pivotal the relationship between teacher and student is, and what it might involve philosophically and ethically.

I arranged to meet Jemma for interview in July 2016, after the school term had ended and when the school schedule was less demanding. She told me she had decided to take a career break and teach abroad for several years and was due to leave in a few weeks. She said she felt extremely proud about finishing her Master's degree with a result she was very pleased about, and was looking forward with certain apprehension to her years abroad. Because we arranged to meet during the summer holidays, she suggested that I conducted the interview in a local café. The café was busy so we both had to speak in a more pronounced manner than normal for our speech to be clear on the dictaphone. Jemma was very positive and excited about what she had achieved through her studies and her career break, and was very happy to discuss and share her experiences and perspectives of P4C with me throughout our interview.

Thematic Analysis as my Analytic Strategy

I employed a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data, the primary goals of which were to 1) systematically review and condense the raw interview data for analysis, 2) establish clear links between the research question and the summary findings from the information that was shared by individuals during the interviews, and 3) review information from the ‘livedness’ of the research that may help contextualize research findings. Participant interviews were transcribed manually from audio file to a Microsoft Word document. This allowed me to open a conversation between myself and the interview data during analysis where transcripts were read, re-read and interview recordings played back and listened to in order to pick out any points of inflection or other communication cues that seemed relevant to the participants’ responses.

I used a thematic analytical method for this study because it allowed a large degree of flexibility and responsiveness when creating concepts from the data and in identifying, analysing and reporting results. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis should be considered as an analytic method in its own right and applicable across a wide range of different theoretical and epistemological approaches, arguing that it comprises an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analysing qualitative data:

Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.82).

Thematic analysis was the most appropriate approach for my research project because it facilitated an investigation of the data in three interrelated ways:

- Firstly, from a data perspective, where coding and induction are carried out.
- Secondly, from a research question perspective, where the data was checked for consistency with the research question.
- Thirdly, from a legitimacy perspective, where the complexity and nuance of the data is dealt with sensitively and reflexively in order to legitimate the providing of insightful and reliable information that expressed the participants' voices authentically when illustrating the data.

The identification of themes and concepts is a central aspect of thematic analysis and served as a vital part of the research data I collected. Themes encapsulate key ideas about the data in relation to the research questions and represent the patterns of meaning contained within the data set/s.

The process of determining themes must be consistent since it is through the linking together and coordination of the themes that the wider research picture is painted. I did this by close reading of the interview transcripts and sensitive listening to the interview recordings. For instance, in a participant's transcript, the inclusion of certain words or phrases during an exchange would draw my attention if I believed that particular choice of words or expression held a certain resemblance to specific subject matter within the area of philosophy of education. For example, if a participant spoke about their practice in terms of creating opportunities for student discussion or about opening up their classroom to dialogue, I interpreted this as resonating with themes in the literature, such as democratic education, philosophy as pedagogy, and teaching as a practice. In doing this, first and foremost were the themes alluded to by the *participant* that I felt echoed with the literature, and not the other way round. I would seek to summarise a connection into adequate phrases or words shared with themes and concepts contained in the literature. On many occasions there

was no connection to be made with the literature at all and the process would begin again. Often I would get a sense that the participant was expressing something that was new to me and which I would have to consult with broader literature themes to explore further. During interpretation, I considered what I felt the participants were trying to say through reading and re-reading their transcripts over and over again, effectively tuning my ear in to hear what it was that was important to them as they responded to my interview questions and elaborated on their views.

My interpretation might be considered inductive in approach, allowing the creation of concepts from the frequent, dominant and significant themes inherent in the data, and thus avoiding restraints commonly imposed by more rigidly structured methodologies (Thomas, 2003). However, it needs to be emphasised that my analysis of the data was not a simple case of matching phrases from the interview transcripts with corresponding words from the literature. There was a detailed listening to the interviews where I tried to gauge what the participants were attempting to impart, listening out for things that spoke to me personally as I bored down deeper and deeper into the world of P4C and philosophy in schools. This did not amount to simply scanning the data for things that coincided with my established ideas. I undertook my thematic analytical approach within the crucial context of the *livedness* of my enquiry. A significant amount of time was spent being present, establishing a foundation of mutual trust requisite of practitioner research before the interviews took place and data was collected. How participant responses resonated with concepts related to education and democracy were informed as much by the social relationships I established in the lead up to the interview as they were by the literature with which they echoed.

Surveillance, Salience & Resonance: My Data Analysis Procedure

According to Lichtman, data analysis in qualitative research is “inductive and iterative” (2006: p.159), being both a process and an interpretation. My research involved raw data in the form of semi-structured interview transcripts condensed into smaller summary formats through multiple waves of coding over a series of cumulative phases to generate illuminative information consistent with my research question. The connecting piece is myself as researcher – the ‘livedness’ of my experience practicing P4C, immersing myself in a school and dialoguing with teachers and other practitioners in an attempt to locate and articulate perspectives on education and democracy (see Chapter Four – A Lived Enquiry Concerning Democratic Education, p.120-163). My analysis attempts to thread into the coding and theme construction what I had come to know and learn about the participants and their schools through the relationships forged with them in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

The metaphor of needle and thread I find useful to portray both how the data analysis proceeded as well as the research as a whole. I view my research study as resembling a patchwork quilt, one where the different patches are sewn together to form a larger picture on the quilt. The different participant interviews, like segmented patches, were stitched together in a manner that ensured the livedness of the study (the reason how those interviews came to be in the first place) was sewn into the material of the research. This is why the process of analysis involved both a reading and a listening component – reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and listening to what really spoke to me as a researcher. This means trying to suffuse my analysis with the lived quality that enabled me to access the schools and immerse myself in a practice that was deeply felt by the participants in my attempt to represent as genuinely as possible the relationships that resulted from this quality. Examples of my analysis process are contained in Appendix 06.

The analytic process consisted of three phases of coding (a Surveillance phase, a Salience phase and a Resonance phase). These conceptualisations of the three phases emerged during discussion in a supervision session, as I was reporting on my lived approach to the data analysis. The first phase, Surveillance, contained six steps and refers to the fact that coding during this phase involved close reading of all transcripts in their entirety for the identification and construction of themes. This was a broad landscape from which to start analysis and involved surveying the raw interview data for things that stood out in terms of my research as I attempted to code and thematize. The Salience phase is so named, because coding during this phase sought to connect the concepts created from Surveillance sensitively with segments of the participants' conversation. This involved careful listening, tuning my ear in to what I felt was important to the participants from having gotten to know them, what I felt they were saying in their own way, allowing myself to be drawn to specific areas of the transcripts – exchanges between me as researcher and them as participants – that seemed salient and pivotal. The Resonance phase pursued these salient exchanges for meaning in terms of what spoke to me as a researcher enquiring into my research question. I sought resonance between participants' saliences and the research question, key areas of what they said that illuminated my search for meaning as framed by the research question. This resonance reverberated with the views of myself as researcher and practitioner, the participants involved in the study and the wider context of P4C, Educate Together and education and democracy in Ireland.

The Surveillance phase was made up of six steps of coding, based on Lichtman's "Three C's of analysis – from Coding to Concepts" (Lichtman, 2006: p.251). All six participant interviews were used during this phase to create themes that would then be used for the other two phases of analysis. One participant interview (Aiden) was not used after the surveillance phase as it did

not contain exchanges lengthy enough that resonated clearly and obviously with the themes generated by this phase needed for the Saliency phase. Although Aiden's interview was significant alongside the other interview transcripts in generating themes for the Surveillance phase, I realised during the Saliency phase that Aiden's responses were too short to reflect the same level of dialogic exchange that the other interviews did. I was not able to locate, during the Saliency phase, an exchange long enough within his interview transcript that accurately represented one or more of the themes generated from the Surveillance phase.

Together, Surveillance, Saliency and Resonance made up an iterative and inductive analysis aimed at constructing meaning from participant interview data. This data was firstly analysed to generate themes or concepts (Surveillance). The data was then returned to, in light of these generated themes and concepts, to locate exchanges significant to the research question (Saliency). These exchanges were then compared with one another, in order to hear and locate areas of congruence, divergence and contradiction with the research question (Resonance). I analysed all interview transcripts concurrently one after another. These three phases of coding are presented in detail along with an interpretation of the results of the analysis in the following section.

Surveillance Phase:

Based on Lichtman's (2006) recommendation in her Three C's of analysis (p.251), this process involved six steps of analysis moving from coding to categorization to the generation of concepts:

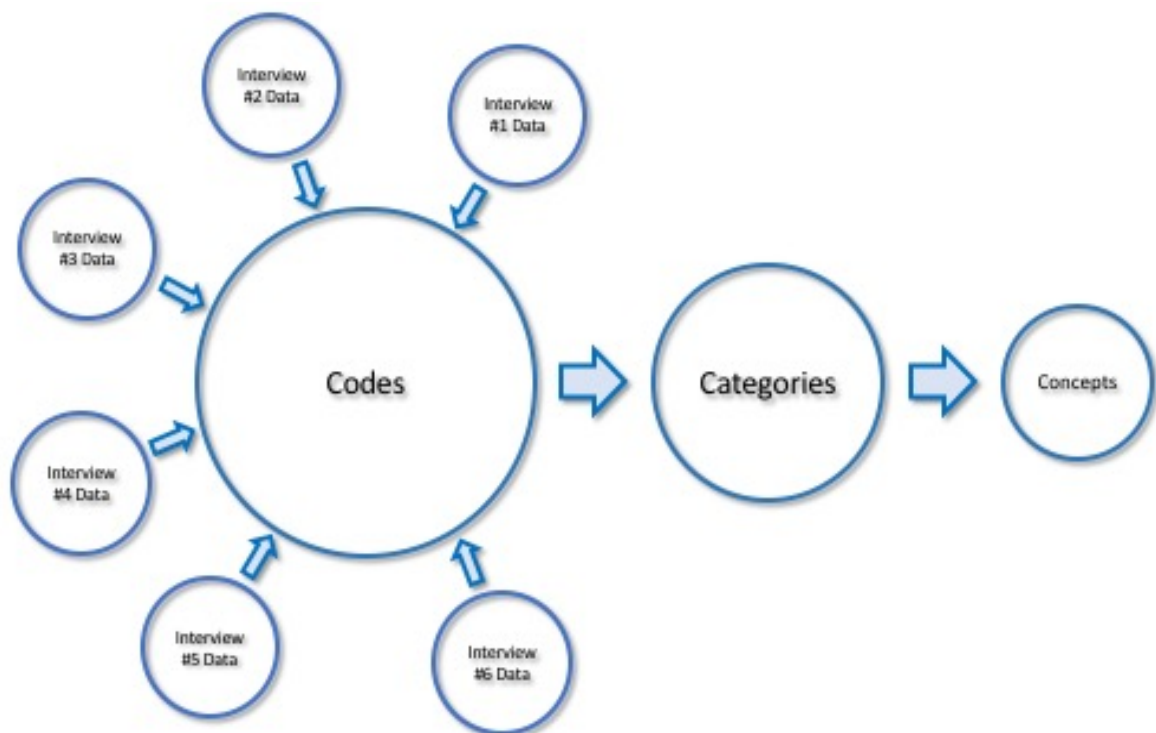
1. Initial coding – close reading of participants' transcripts to detect general ideas and issues relating to the research question. Transcripts were read through multiple times before initial codes were inserted using the "Comment" function of Microsoft Word for each individual transcript.

Initial codes at this stage consisted of summary ideas found within the data transcripts. Sentences and statements were reviewed and coded into smaller summary sentences that sought to encapsulate what the respondent was expressing during the interview. An example of some of my initial codes were “Classroom questioning and discussion”, “Flexibility in understanding of what philosophy is or should be”, and “Taking issue with competency-based curriculum objectives”.

2. Revisiting initial coding – returning to the large number of initial codes and summary ideas developed in order to collate and collapse into similar codes. An inductive approach was used to remove redundant codes, modify and rename existing codes, and move from focused sets of precise data to broader generalisations. Conceptual units were coded by their specific content as well as by their potential connections to the research question, using terms relevant to the overall study, where possible, as code labels.
3. Developing an initial list of categories – organising codes into categories, where some codes became major topics and others became subsets of these topics. For example, any responses that formed a conceptual unit about how a teacher viewed their role was coded as “role of the teacher”, those regarding teachers’ P4C practice in their daily teaching activities were coded as “P4C as pedagogy”. Initial identifiers were narrow, allowing for specific categorization of the data. Categories were generated as the data was read and analysed, developed from one long list of codes and thematic phrases into lists of significant categories with related codes as subsets. Any one conceptual unit was identified by multiple categories at this time. Examples of some of the categories used were “Developing and learning as a teacher”, “P4C as a platform and a unique experience” and “Finding areas for P4C to slot into school day/curriculum”.

4. Modifying initial category list based on additional re-reading – after re-reading, some categories were considered less or more important than others. Some categories were combined into one, continuing the iterative process of induction from specific codes to general themes and concepts. Responses related to a similar theme were pasted together in a table using Microsoft Word according to colour. Data within each theme were reviewed and common ideas collated to provide a more meaningful description.
5. Revisiting categories and subcategories – I further assessed generated categories and sub-categories on their significance, removing further redundancies to identify elements vital to the study. Themes across all participants were sought, using the coding schemes. At this time, similar codes and categories were collapsed across participants, creating one overall scheme to best explain the research. All data were then organized by theme across participants, demonstrating the importance of some themes over others according to the quantity of items.
6. Moving from categories to concepts – the final stage identified key concepts that reflected the meaning attached to the collected data to create a reasonable and logical chain of illuminative insight (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Concepts were generated based on luminosity and commonality of themes across the data, with those related to the research question pursued in depth. Categories were gradually refined through critical evaluation in which alternative explanations and understandings were considered. Finally, an assessment of data categories with regard to acceptance themes and concepts was conducted, with those deemed most appropriate to the research included in the results of this first analysis phase.

Diagram 3: First phase of analysis (Surveillance)



Five concepts in total were created from this first phase of analysis: 1) Teaching as a practice/role of the teacher; 2) P4C as pedagogy; 3) Children and childhood; 4) Conceptions of philosophy and 5) Linkages between P4C and Educate Together. Each interview echoed with several of the concepts, with one interview in particular echoing with all of them. This first phase of the analysis process I termed ‘Surveillance’ due to the wide scanning nature of the analysis at this first juncture. This phase ensured the creation of several well-developed and supported concepts that were foundational for the next phase in the analysis process, moving towards a richness of meaning that tried to do justice to the difference and complexity within the interview data.

Saliency Phase:

For the Saliency phase of analysis, I returned to the interview transcripts again in light of the concepts that were generated from the Surveillance phase.

Whereas the Surveillance emphasised the close reading and re-reading of participant interview transcripts, this second Saliency phase emphasised the listening out for what the participants were trying to say. It built upon the previous iterative and inductive process through recursivity – returning to the data again seeking to locate saliency with the five dominant concepts that emerged from the Surveillance phase. Listening here does not mean keeping my ears open for key phrases/words that may or may not feature within the five concepts developed during Surveillance. It means a keen type of listening to understand what participants were trying to say, listening back over the voice recordings alongside a re-reading of the transcripts, listening out for tone, emphases, purpose and other cues in the participants' responses. I listened out for what really mattered to the participants that was salient with what I felt they were trying to express. Recalling my earlier metaphor of a patchwork quilt, I view this part of the analysis as the careful selection of what patches to sew, how they are assembled by means of a strategy of grouping together related pieces, and selecting where each panel might go in terms of conceptual sense for the overall design of the quilt and the larger image made up by the different patches as a coherent pattern emerges. This is what is meant by saliency for the purposes of my research – significant areas of participants' interviews that reverberated with the concepts to express what is important to them.

My thinking throughout the Saliency phase of analysis was to continue the conversation with the data first started when I began transcribing the interviews. The goal of this phase was to locate specific exchanges, segments of participants' speech that clearly reflected the concepts generated, expressed in their own individual way and representative of the multiplicity and variance that existed within the interview data. Exchanges were not limited to blocks of sentences or paragraphs extracted from a larger contextual discussion. I sought lengths of conversation *in their own right* that sometimes included my input,

prompts and questions as a researcher and interviewer, while at other times did not. The focus was on what a participant said that evinced one or more of the key ideas contained within the concepts, with pertinent sections of transcript designated a colour according to the five different concepts.

The result of this phase of analysis was sixteen salient exchanges totalling 7900 words collectively. As mentioned earlier, there were no exchanges of suitable length from one of the participants (Aiden). This might be due to the fact that Aiden was the least experienced and most apprehensive about his P4C practice. Although his interview was vital during the Surveillance phase moving from codes to categories to concepts, there were no discernible exchanges of adequate length of speech that could be used for the third and final phase of analysis, the Resonance phase. In terms of the exchanges themselves, there was one exchange each from Declan, Joan and Jemma's interview, three exchanges from Merriam and ten exchanges from John. Table 2 below presents the results of the Salience phase, showing how many times each participant's exchange/s resonated with the generated concepts and themes. The exchanges differ in length and each segment that echoes with a particular concept varies from a few lines of speech to several paragraphs. John's exchanges reverberated the most with the concepts and he was the only participant whose interview transcript reflected all five of the generated concepts. Because his exchanges resonated so much with the concepts, I invited him to join a participatory co-analysis with me and my research supervisors as part of the third and final phase of my analysis, which is presented in the next section. The Salience phase of coding prepared and authenticated the data so that I could conduct the final phase of analysis that would provide a coherent and consistent connection to the research question as a whole.

Table 2: Results of second phase of analysis (Salience) – how many times participants’ exchanges echoed with generated concepts

Concepts	Declan	Joan	Jemma	Mirriam	John
Teaching as a Practice/Role of the Teacher	2	2	0	2	7
P4C as Pedagogy	1	0	0	2	6
Children & Childhood	1	0	1	4	5
Conceptions of Philosophy	0	0	1	1	2
Linkage between P4C & ET	1	0	0	2	3

Resonance Phase:

The goal of the third and final phase of analysis was to seek and establish congruent, divergent and contradictory elements that echoed amongst the salient exchanges in order to provide a descriptive framework from which a link between P4C and Educate Together could be asserted and interpreted. This phase focused on how each exchange spoke to me as a researcher, how they echoed with myself as a P4C practitioner, and represented the things that I felt were pivotal in terms of answering the research question and decisive in my understanding of teachers’ notions of education and democracy. I focused on how each of the participants’ narratives resonated with one other through thick rich descriptions (Stake, 1995). Considered when searching and contrasting for resonance were: observational elements (such as participants’ school

community), tone of the interview (not only tone of voice, but also the broader tone and atmosphere of each interview) and my own experience as a researcher conducting the interviews. Also considered were other impressions sensed from informal discussions before and after the respective interviews informed by the relationship forged with the participants.

Because John's interview reverberated so resolutely with the generated concepts, I felt it necessary to conduct a participatory co-analysis with him and both of my research supervisors. John was the only participant I did this with. I wanted to make absolutely sure that the things he was saying in his interview and the connections I was making and the understandings I was interpreting were represented accurately, sensitively and authentically. During this co-analysis, we dialogued about some of the responses John gave during his interview. John echoed strongly the same sentiments and understandings upon which the concepts generated from the Surveillance phase were produced and he was very supportive of how his interview was interpreted and very happy with how he responded during his interview. This co-analysis was recorded with a Dictaphone which I listened to repeatedly during this Resonance phase. I also thought about the cumulative effect of what the participants said in relation to each other's exchanges, the order that the interviews were conducted, how I as researcher progressed from one interview to the next and how I as an interviewer prompted questions and responses from the participants.

To structure the Resonance phase I sought to locate areas of congruence, divergence and contradiction amongst the participants' exchanges that resonated with linkages between P4C and Educate Together. By focusing on these things within the interview data, reflexivity and self-disclosure about my position as researcher could be maintained for the analytical process (Creswell, 2007), ensuring that it was not confined to seeking *only* congruence and commonality amongst the participants' responses. I also remained cognisant of Weber's

(1993) suggestion that the narrative anecdote is an important tool for pedagogical research. This is due to the condensing of meaning and the incorporation simultaneously of both the particular and the universal as well as the theoretical and the practical:

... telling stories renders life experiences accessible in relevant and meaningful ways. The very process of sharing and hearing our life stories involves re-living them and reflecting on them as we simultaneously live the evolving story of the research experience (Weber, 1993: p.75).

Congruence, Divergence & Contradiction: Interpreting my Data

This section presents an interpretation of the results of the Resonance phase of my data analysis. Each aspect of this phase – congruence, divergence and contradiction – is presented along with quotations from the interview data and references to the literature. My interpretation set out to connect the different things that the participants said that were of importance to them from their interview exchanges.

Congruence:

Congruence refers to the parts of the participants' exchanges that I felt expressed sentiments that were similar or in agreement with each other. One particular area of congruence that emerged concerned how most of the participants related previous teaching experiences in non-Educate Together schools as being very different to their current Educate Together teaching experience. Declan said the schools in which he taught before he became an Educate Together school principal, that may have objected to his engaging in P4C, were not the schools he wanted to work in:

Declan: ...If I think about the schools that I taught in over the years and the schools where I think you'd have struggled, or this would have been like

bringing Sellafield [nuclear power plant] into the school, I know that those would have been schools that I would have instantly not wanted to work in.

He went as far to say that if those kind of schools were the only schools available to work in as a teacher, he may have given up teaching entirely:

Declan: ...I said this in my interview [for position of principal], I possibly would have given up teaching had there only been those schools. I couldn't have done it.

Declan didn't consider the difference between the two types of schools to be specifically centred on P4C, but rather the atmosphere and feeling of having to justify his engagement with P4C in terms of the school curriculum:

Declan: ...It wouldn't have been because of the philosophy thing, I just know that it's almost like *that's* the bit that wasn't in that school, and that's the bit where you'd be whaling [dragging] it in and they'd [principal, board of management] be saying "what about the curriculum?"...

Declan was not alone in viewing this previous experience in a somewhat negative light. Joan also recounts her non-Educate Together teaching experience negatively, particularly in terms of how P4C would have been received in her old school:

Joan: ...I know that to have done some of the subject matter and some of the classes [there] that I do here, to have tried to do something like that [P4C] in my previous teaching experience would have been very very difficult.

As did John:

John: Well, I think if I was in a new school or a different setting, I'm thinking even that my wife is a teacher and if I had to go out and work in her school, I'm not sure how welcome or how open the principal or any of

my fellow colleagues would be if they saw me doing 15 hours a week of this [P4C], like I'm not sure how it would be viewed.

John makes the point here that even though his school community may not fully grasp the idea behind engaging with P4C, it would however be accepted as an important educational activity in terms of children:

John: ...some people for sure don't buy into it at all, they just haven't really looked into it. But the *majority* of people in our school, whereas they may not like the complexity of some of the stuff [P4C theory], they would see the benefit of it, and to be honest they would see the benefit even in the children's interaction [with each other] around the school and stuff like that.

Although these earlier experiences were viewed somewhat negatively, this was not because of the difference in ethos between non-Educate Together and Educate Together schools. Rather, it seems as though the participants felt that they were or would have been unsupported in engaging in a practice such as P4C. John mentioned that even though some of his school community did not buy into the idea behind P4C, they were none-the-less supportive of it when the benefit to children and their development became apparent. I know that John is very active in his community and sat on the board of management of his school for years as a teacher representative, so in this regard I would consider him to be very aware of how his school community felt in regard to things like this. Merriam was the only participant who did not mention previous teaching experiences in a non-Educate Together school. She told me that she has only ever taught in Educate Together schools since she first qualified as a teacher.

During the Surveillance phase of the analysis process, Aiden mentioned his previous non-Educate Together teaching experience for the reason that he simply had not considered engaging in P4C until his current Educate Together school and encouraged by Declan, his principal. Similarly, Jemma said that she had never taught in a non-Educate Together school, but would find it difficult to

do so should the situation ever arise. It is clear from this congruence that the environment of the school in which the participants work is very different to that which they have experienced in the past. This means there are recognizable differences for teachers teaching in Educate Together schools and in what would be considered more established denominational school communities in Ireland. What this indicates is that there is a connection between the participants' school environment and the sense of support they feel to engage in their practice of P4C.

Another area of congruence was how two of the participants (Declan and John) saw P4C 'fitting in' with their daily school activities, specifically Educate Together's Learn Together curriculum – an ethical education curriculum taught in place of religious instruction in Educate Together primary schools (Educate Together, 2018). This 'fitting in' refers to both the time allotment (thirty minutes a day) for Learn Together during the school day as well as to the content of the Learn Together curriculum itself, which contains four strands: 'Moral and Spiritual Development', 'Equality and Justice', 'Belief Systems' and 'Ethics and the Environment'. Here, Declan talks about the Learn Together curriculum lacking something which he felt P4C provided:

Declan: I went into it [Educate Together teaching] thinking that there's a little bit missing in our Ethical curriculum, there's a bit missing, and this isn't just [participant's school], it's any of the Educate Together schools that I've taught in, there's a little bit that's washy [wishy-washy, weak or feeble] in there, and that needs another part. And I think that this is it.

We can see here that Declan very definitely asserts a view that P4C could be a missing link in the Learn Together curriculum for him. John suggests something similar:

John: ... when you see it [P4C] in action, when you see the results, you're willing to use discretion time, which is allowed in the curriculum, you're

willing to bend some of the objectives in SPHE [Social, Personal and Health Education], in Learn Together [Educate Together ethical education curriculum], history, English, all of these things, science even, ethics.

Interestingly, John focuses on teachers themselves finding not just a space and time within the curricula, but also a rationale for engaging in such practice which we can see below:

John: ... You're willing to be creative with your planning and your explanation, your rationale for why you're doing this intervention. But if you don't see the benefit of it or you're not that confident doing those sessions, because at the end of the day you are allowing children to say more or less what's in their head, and some teachers don't like that, they think it's a little bit too free, but I can see then how you could say that there's no time to do that in the curriculum, there's too much to do. But from [my] personal experiences, there's lots of time, there's plenty of time.

Merriam made a connection between P4C and SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), one of the seven curricular subjects for Irish primary schools:

Merriam: ... Like, a lot of the SPHE material is very out of date now and they [Dept. of Education] are bringing out a new programme and stuff, but I was thinking that philosophy might slot in there, where we teach children that they have a voice, that they have value, their opinions have value, they don't need to change their opinion because their friend doesn't agree with them anymore. So initially I suppose that's how I linked it with this school...

What this suggests is that participants have actively sought to rationalize their adoption of P4C within their teaching practice. Although Declan, John and Merriam view how P4C can fit into their teaching practice and their normal classroom activities in different ways, their views converge in terms of them

seeking to justify and legitimate their practice of P4C with regard to both the national curriculum and their individual school.

One of the most discernible point of congruence, however, was the tendency for Merriam, John and Jemma towards the encouragement of collaborative discussions within their classrooms:

Merriam: ... But I want them to know that they have a voice, that they can speak out, that they can say what they want to say without fear of someone telling them that “you’re wrong”, and to *carry* that with them.

Interviewer: So, you think that questioning, and that openness to questioning is important for a democracy?

Merriam: Yes, but to not follow the crowd.

Merriam’s encouragement of discussion in her classroom seems to centre around children not just being “allowed” to speak, but also to be able to voice their disagreement or express views that question what might be considered normal or conventional:

Merriam: Well, I would like the children to question things ...I want them to question everything that they’re told and for them to say “is that real?”, “who, me, you, that?”, “why do I believe them?” or “have I seen something to prove it?”. And to be able to say “well you know, I don’t agree with you”, and to feel safe in saying that, that it’s ok to say that. To have an opinion without thinking “well that’s not right, because I have a different opinion”. So, I’d like them to be able to express their opinion safely...

Comparably, John’s encouragement and support of dialogue and discussion within his classroom also focuses on giving a voice to children. For John, the idea of children discussing things openly and collaboratively within his classroom is a powerful basis for community life:

John: ...even the children, the calmness of them setting up their chairs and sitting around, the excitement, the anticipation of “oh, what are we going to talk about next?”, to think that a group of humans, never mind children, could get that kind of energy out of just wanting to sit down and discuss something is so amazing and powerful to me. And I think if that's what they could teach other people going forward, like just communities of enquiry, of dialogue, of respect and listening to each other, of disagreeing in a very safe and supportive environment, and just really good interaction, personal interaction.

John sees primary education as “just another [building] block”, “more of a foundation ... for the child”, something that echoes strongly with Higgins’ (2011) idea of teaching as a practice and a professional ethics of practice. What is interesting here is how John connects the dialogue and discussion that takes place in his classroom, the building of a foundation that he spoke about above, with notions of wider community life and democracy:

John: ... I mean what do we mean by democracy at the end of the day? What I want it to be, anyways, is that they feel empowered, that they feel like they have something of value to share, whatever it is, even if it's just their opinion, that they feel like it is ok to join committees or organising committees, whatever it may be around the country, that they feel valued enough to think “I’m important as well, I have something to give and I would be happy to work in a group”.

The dialogue and discussion that John enables in his classroom seems to mirror the workings of a democratic community in action, where there is a “coming together” of “many voices” and for “many opportunities for those many voices to be heard and for change”. As John says, this for him is what “real democracy” is, something that he believes is an important foundation for children, one that “they will always remember, either explicitly or implicitly, whatever way it comes back to them when they’re older”. For Jemma,

philosophical discussion in her classroom means opening a space to allow children to speak and to be heard:

Jemma: ... to go back to the democracy in schools thing, there's that *want* for fairness, in the sense that *all* children bring something to the classroom but not all children are always heard. And for me philosophy always gave me the opportunity to allow every child to have a say, to say something and not be overpowered by people who think that their way is the right way or that have more to say. The floor [for speaking and discussion] is open.

Declan did not mention the idea of collaborative discussion in his classroom, which I put down to him being a teaching principal and his additional duties that extend beyond his classroom. The convergence of thought around the encouragement of discussion in classrooms seems to involve an undercurrent of equality in education, of not just 'permitting' children to discuss and question within the classroom, but looks toward facilitating and listening to children's voices, providing a space for them to speak and to be heard, something that I associate closely with democratic education (Biesta, 2015). Although it is certainly possible for a teacher to support and encourage classroom discussion *without* engaging in democratic education, the points of congruence, as recounted above, suggest there are broader views on education and democracy that underscore participants' inclination towards encouraging discussion in their classrooms.

Divergence:

Besides congruence, there were some points of divergence amongst research participants, as I listened closely to their experiences, and how they spoke about their understandings of the educational aims of P4C and Educate Together. Divergence for these purposes means where there was a difference of opinion or outlook amongst participants regarding certain notions of their P4C practice. The views of the participants may be related to greater or lesser

extents. However, through the lens of divergence I tried to chart the direction that such views were pointed.

The first point of divergence I noted concerns P4C as a pedagogy, by which I mean the methods and practice of education. For Declan, P4C enabled the sharing of knowledge:

Declan: ... if you go in with a bit of pasta from your own house, you'll get that [from the children] "Oh, is that from *your* house?" It's that *sharing*... if you bring your own vision or your own objectives to *your* pedagogy, that is a very generous thing that you are doing, and it's like that piece of pasta, they are *thrilled* [to engage with it].

Pedagogy for Declan seems to be a very personal thing, something that is meaningful for a teacher to bring into their classroom to share with their students. It is interesting to see how this shared aspect involves a teacher's 'vision' and that this vision is part of what is being shared with the students. For Merriam, P4C allowed better listening, in order for her to get to know the children's personalities as well as the children to get to know themselves and each other:

Merriam: ... And to listen. I don't think teachers actually listen. I know that some days I just *can't* listen. I need to get through all of this stuff today and I'm listening for the correct answer so I know that I've achieved my objective so I'm not really listening to the "side" answers. It would give you an insight into some of the children's personalities I think as well... they're the kind of things I wouldn't know about my class and I wouldn't perhaps be aware about how that affects their relationships in the yard or in the classroom, or who they play with, who they don't play with. Those kind of things. I just think it would allow you to get to know the children better and them to get to know each other *and* themselves through their answers and through listening to each other.

By emphasising the importance of listening for a teacher, Merriam's view on pedagogy diverges slightly from that of Declan's; whereas both participants, generally speaking, pursue democratic practices in their classrooms, Merriam's desire to listen aims at adapting her own teaching practice and classroom interactions with her students. I do not see this being opposed to Declan's desire to share knowledge with his students, but rather that these views are divergent strands stemming from a common plait. Similar to Merriam's, John's view of P4C as a pedagogy emphasises listening, but on behalf of students listening to each other and learning how to respond to each other. Here, John talks about how important discussion is for him even if students pass or relinquish their opportunity to speak during his P4C sessions:

John: ... even if the people [in the community of enquiry] don't speak and they pass [on their opportunity to speak], whatever it is, they are listening, *actively* listening, they might be listening better than they ever have in their life, they might be hearing more than they've ever heard in their life, so I'm even comfortable with that. Because they are learning and they are engaged.

As with Merriam, John appreciates the importance of listening, albeit not on his own behalf but that of the students. However, the educational purpose of this listening is for John I think keenly associated with notions of democracy. He told me that he didn't "have to come up with topics to talk about" for his P4C sessions because there are "so many things everyday" that crop up during his normal classroom activities that he just "notes the topics that they might talk about" down to discuss later. In so doing, John described himself and the children becoming "more conscious" since:

John: ...they challenge themselves to think about something and to form an opinion, and if they're not ready to share their opinion, they challenge themselves to listen and to find out a little bit more from those around them so they can then see "am I comfortable now with my opinion?"...

What this suggests is that the notion of P4C as a pedagogy for John highlights a reflexive quality within P4C that draws teachers' attention to how they act upon the values they hold. In John's case, this can be seen through his negotiation of the curriculum and his listening out for potential discussion topics that crop up during his normal classroom activities with the aim of increasing opportunities for P4C and philosophical discussion in his classroom. These three divergent strands – P4C as a pedagogy for sharing, listening and dialogue – although closely connected, can be seen as distinct in terms of certain educational aims and purposes.

A second point of divergence related to P4C providing opportunities for equality within teachers' classrooms. For John this meant equality in 'action' rather than just merely in 'principle':

John: I think it fits perfectly with the school ethos, the child-centeredness and the equality-basedness, you know, you do espouse all of these things, but this is a way to have them in action *in* the classroom, not just outside parading under everyone getting to hold a meeting in a hall, like that's not equality, that just timetabling.

However, equality in the classroom for John is not confined to the students – it is not a one sided matter concerned with boosting certain freedoms or rights for children. John positions himself very firmly as one among many in the endeavour for equality in his classroom and does not consider himself as a sole authority:

So this is a very practical way of saying “your voice is as valuable as a voice in society as my voice as the teacher”. And that's something I really push all the time, we're just twenty seven humans [class teacher and students] sitting in a circle, there's nothing other than experience and time on this earth, that's all I have, there's no other difference whatsoever. Like I have as much to learn as you guys [students].

John told me that, as an active member of his school's board of management, he believed that the idea of equality "fits in really nicely" with the management structure of his school, who are "very comfortable with that being a teaching pedagogy, explicitly *and* timetabled". For Merriam and Declan, however, the idea of P4C as providing opportunities for equality was seen in terms of the ethos of their school. Declan sees P4C in equitable terms through balancing the Learn Together Ethical Education curriculum, which, in turn, substantiates the ethos of his school:

Declan: ... And I think that this [P4C] is it – it is within the spirit of the ethos, that this would fit in the ethical curriculum, in the curriculum that determines the ethos, because ethos is *not* a 30min thing every day [runs deeper than 30min daily requirement].

The 30 minutes that Declan mentions refers to is the period allotted daily to religious instruction in the Irish National School Curriculum¹². Educate Together substitute religious instruction with their own Learn Together curriculum during this time. This is clearly something that Declan considers to be instrumental to equality in his classrooms and his school, and recognises P4C as a means through which to do so. Merriam similarly views P4C as providing opportunities for equality in the classroom, however in her case it is in terms of students' well-being:

Merriam: I was thinking that philosophy might slot in there, where we teach children that they have a voice, that they have value, their opinions have value... I suppose that's how I linked it with this school, because we are looking to improve the areas that are low, like self-esteem, self-confidence, bullying issues, all that kind of stuff... I suppose that would then carry forward into society, if they learn good skills in school and to

¹² Irish National School Curriculum: <https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/93de2707-f25e-4bee-9035-92b00613492e/Introduction-to-primary-curriculum.pdf>

learn that's it's ok to say no, to be different. And I suppose that then is the ethos of Educate Together, you know, difference. **Interviewer:** You mean, like, to embrace those differences? **Merriam:** We celebrate them, we applaud them.

The ethos of Merriam's school, like Declan's, is central to the equality she has in mind. Unlike Declan however, this equality seems to involve her students' well-being relative to each other – she speaks of bullying and self-esteem as an important feature of her school's outlook, something that she and her school community are concerned about and wish to address. Merriam seems to associate P4C as a pedagogy in terms of equality through difference – that there is an equality achievable through embracing and celebrating difference, different cultures, backgrounds & views. She told me that her school had conducted a survey that found some of the students in the senior classes had low self-esteem and they had been working towards improving children's self-esteem by drawing up a charter that would represent fairness and equality. Merriam clearly views P4C as providing opportunities for equality towards which this idea of equality through difference may be directed:

Merriam: ...I was hoping that this kind of thing [philosophy with children] could slot in with it [school addressing self-esteem issues] as well. You know, just to be able to say to a child "you're *allowed* to say that, that's absolutely fine, just because you don't agree with that person doesn't make what you're saying wrong, no matter how much they shout at you". And just allow them to know that that's *true*...

This view diverges slightly from both Declan's view of equality through certain curricular provisions strengthened by the ethos of the school and John's view of equality through supporting open dialogue in which he himself is an equal interlocutor. Both points of divergence – P4C as a pedagogy for sharing, listening and dialogue and P4C providing opportunities for equality – as seen

from the extracts above, point toward the idea that P4C is integral to how some of the participants view their role as a teacher in an Educate Together school.

A final point of divergence concerns understandings of P4C and democratic practice. For Merriam, this idea was confined to her classroom, telling me that P4C “would encourage teachers and students to listen to each other more”:

Merriam: ... I do think it would make for a more harmonious class instead of fighting with them to stay quiet.

Here, Merriam expresses her concerns about her actions as a teacher, attempting to balance out her authority as a teacher with allowing her students to talk:

Merriam: ... Because that’s what I find difficult for them, they don’t know when they can speak and when not to speak...

It is interesting how Merriam has zoned in on what she perceives as a problematic issue for her students – not knowing when they can and cannot talk – and interesting still how she attempts to address this issue in terms of P4C and democratic practice. Merriam’s association of P4C with a “more harmonious class” has deep conceptual links with democratic practices in the classroom, which seems to drive her attempt to provide a space for her students in which they can talk and she can listen to them:

Merriam: ... If they [children] know that their voices will be heard at a time that is appropriate and they can talk to you [the teacher] and to each other, then there’s an outlet for them at some stage during the day.

The “outlet” for talking and listening that Merriam refers to is how she understands P4C and democratic practice within the world of her classroom. Merriam’s understanding diverges somewhat from John’s, which projects

beyond the walls of his classroom and seen in much broader terms. Initially, John's view of his P4C practice strikes the same chord as Merriam and Declan in terms of providing opportunities for equality:

John: ... that's what you want, you want people and children, teachers and family to know that you *don't* have to just accept everything. You *can* challenge things. You *can* question things. You can look at things differently than you were taught, differently than by the media or even your own family.

However, this idea of equality extends beyond what is fair and equal for children in what they think and question – it is a basis upon which John rests his conception of citizenship:

John: ... Without disrespecting anyone, you're well within your right to look at two sides to every point and to form your opinion based on the best evidence you can find and not on pure notion or blind loyalty, or ignorance. Like, all of these things, I believe anyway, make us better citizens.

The ability to challenge and question beyond constraint from societal influences such as family, media and schooling, is a fundamental aspect of being a citizen for John. This means that there is no difference for John between himself as a citizen and that of a child:

John: ... At the end of the day, I'm a citizen and so is an eleven year old child in my class, an equal citizen. And I'm not just talking about them or me, I'm talking about all of us.

John is the only participant in this study to mention citizenship, which, for him, is deeply rooted in his understanding of democratic practice expressed through P4C in his classroom:

John: ... that's what they need, we all do, not just the kids. So we're just giving the children as younger citizens *that* avenue and using our time in

school to do it. That's why I think it's just so important, it's not just a problem for children, it's a problem for society.

John believes that "society would be better" if it was made up of "citizens who are more active, more participatory", "collaborative, more understanding, more patient", who work together and sees his practice of P4C instantiating this:

John: ...when we look at what we're trying to do when we do Thinking Time or philosophy, that's *exactly* what we're aiming at.

This clearly shows an understanding of democratic practice that extends beyond the confines of the classroom, connecting his actions as a teacher and P4C practitioner with his views of democratic practice and educating for citizenship:

John: ...to think that they are the skills that our politicians need, that our teachers need, the parents and the community leaders, they're the qualities we all need for a more harmonious kind of society and community.

In this way, John's P4C practice affects how he views himself as a teacher and a citizen along with what citizenship in a democratic society means for him:

And that's all we're trying to do, to develop them [qualities] from an early age and to show the value of them, and how practicing them together as a group becomes part of who you are and they're already in there so just allowing them to come out, making you feel better, about yourself and your relationship to others.

For John, P4C practice has directly affected his view of a democratic society. This particular point of divergence around understandings of P4C and democratic practice being both confined to and extending beyond teachers' classrooms co-insides with ideas of democratic education and practice and teachers' wider educational outlooks. The final aspect of the Resonance phase

of my analysis was to locate contradiction between participants' responses, adding balance to my understanding of how teachers experienced and understood the aims of P4C and Educate Together.

Contradiction:

Throughout data analysis of participants' views, John featured most significantly and I grew wary of becoming overly sympathetic to his particular perspectives. His responses were of consequence throughout each area of Resonance – congruence, divergence and contradiction – and are therefore pivotal to understanding P4C in an Irish Educate Together context. However, at this juncture, I should point out that the resonance between John's views and the research question does not amount to simply sympathising with those views in order to suit my research. John's understanding of his P4C practice and his broader educational views are intertwined, making it difficult to disentangle all the things I felt were jumping out at me. For example, when John spoke in his interview he spoke quite fast and used long sentences with few breaks, making it hard to keep up and to decipher the various elements of his responses. It was difficult to determine exactly how his educational outlooks were influenced by his P4C practice and vice versa. He doesn't use the term "P4C" or "philosophy for/with Children" to describe his practice, instead using "Thinking Time", the term used by Josephine Russell (2007), by whom he was inspired to begin practicing in the first place and which encapsulates his attitude and approach towards collaborative philosophical discussion with children. The difficulties encountered listening to and interpreting John's intertwined views on P4C, education and democracy meant that the connection I was forging between P4C and Educate Together was not one in which I adopted simply out of sympathy with his views. It was as a result of tuning in to the voices I felt were emergent from the data and being able to hear what I felt was of importance to the participants, drawing on strands of convergence, divergence and contradiction

between the participants' responses and my interpretation and articulation of them.

The contradiction I searched for amongst participants' views concerned the expression of some element of inconsistency or incompatibility between what each said in relation to one another within each interview. This presented somewhat of a bigger challenge in locating and articulating participants' viewpoints like this since areas of possible contradiction were bound up within participants' different educational outlooks and aims. However, one area of contradiction I located concerned how engagement with P4C related to participants' teaching practice. For John, P4C practice seems to be integral to his role as a teacher. He told me that trying to attach skills and objectives onto P4C that may be desirable from a competency-based educational perspective could result in the children (being observed by an inspector with a checklist of such skills, for example) becoming "uptight" and "tense", since "children are also conscious" of what is going on. John told me that "it takes time to stop yourself from talking when it's not your turn as a teacher" and that it "takes time to learn not to 'stand over' somebody's opinion". This was in case you (as a teacher) think it might cause upset or offence to someone else (with the exception of something prejudicial being said):

John: ... But once you've gotten over *yourself* and gotten away from your own prejudices or anxieties or worries... you can get out of your own way and you can just *discuss*...

John's views seem to express the idea that he is both *affected* and *affecting* through his P4C practice. This is as important to him as a teacher as it is for the students in his class. He talked about the time it takes to develop a sense of what is involved in P4C, how it "takes time" and how, even as an adult, "you never stop learning". His being affected here suggests there is something deeply personal that reaches far beyond a simple desire to improve one's skills

or effectiveness as a teacher; there is an attempt in some way to address or challenge competency-based understandings and market-led views of the aims and purposes of education:

John: ...once you're comfortable with that [idea], that your opinion is as valuable as anyone else's, it mightn't be scientific or technical or any of the things you might think are "desirable", but if you're in school and the teacher is only focusing on the people who are good at maths or good at science, you're going to feel so disillusioned. But if you feel that you are respected just for your opinion, my God, your mind is open to anything.

John affecting the children in his class as a teacher through his P4C practice involves valuing the thoughts and opinions of children as a central purpose of education:

John: ... Deep down what you're doing is giving them a sense of "I respect you, I value your opinion as much as I value the guy that got ten out of ten in his Irish spelling". It's as simple as that, that's genuine. And that can only raise your self-esteem and your willingness to participate across the curriculum, you know?

John talks about the "self-esteem" of his students and valuing their opinions equally, with one another and with himself. He considers himself to be continuously learning and as providing a vital foundation as a primary school teacher in the lives of his students to be able to participate, act and demand equality of respect as citizens of a democratic society. He sees them as people who "can share their opinion in a group" who feel that "they might have good ideas going forward about how things could be done", how they could "help or assist" or how "they could be part of the community". There is a real sense of the 'slow burn' idea central to P4C within John's view, marking a point of contradiction when compared with Joan. For her, P4C complements her teaching practice and enables her to be more effective in her teaching:

Joan: I suppose from the point of view of a teaching atmosphere and a school atmosphere, it's way more open, it's much more co-operative, there's the ability to be able to feel more confident in what you want to do as a teacher...

Joan's engagement in P4C enables her to move more freely within the curriculum, to challenge her students more and raise her students' level of learning up a notch:

Joan: ... if the students here are much more open to being challenged, you're more inclined to say "well, I'm going to take that a step higher, you responded well to what I did the last day, so I wonder if I took it up a notch..."

The affect P4C has on her teaching practice means that Joan feels she can improve as a teacher, to be more effective in her teaching of students, however this improvement seems to be confined within the boundaries set by the curriculum:

Joan: ... if you're in a school where you try something and it falls flat on its face, you're constantly trying to start off and find some way *in*, so I don't think you ever get to the point where you're building the challenges as much as when compared to where I find myself doing it here.

On the face of it, the contradiction located here may be subtle, but I think it is profound. Joan's view of P4C relating to her teaching practice is confined to effectiveness and improvement as a teacher, whereas with John it extends outwards to broader educational and social outlooks. The contradiction here may be due to the fact that Joan is a teacher in the only secondary school in this study. Secondary school students see their teacher less often than primary school students, making the nature of the relationship between teacher and student different. The secondary school curriculum is also much more condensed than in primary school, and has the additional pressure of exam

preparation. However, I think there is a common thread between the teachers in my study, be they based in either primary or secondary schools. Joan talks about being able to “explore a subject more”, than the way she approaches a curricular subject and “the teaching of it” are “quite different”. Joan’s ‘being affected’ is of a different sort, one that does not extend into the same sort of broad social outlook as recounted by John. The questions raised by engaging with P4C in her classroom do not imbue Joan’s teaching with the same challenge to conventional educational norms as they do with John. Joan told me that:

Joan: ... I don’t kind of feel that they’ve been sitting in front of me now for forty minutes, I’ve managed to get you to sit down and be good and now this is what I need to get you to do. There just isn’t a lot of those issues.

The contradiction between John and Joan pivots on the idea of students “sitting down” and “being good”, to not speak out of turn and to listen to the teacher as the sole authority to knowledge. Whilst I believe both participants understand that these more traditional educational maxims are both undesirable and actively challenged through engagement in P4C, it is John whose teaching is permeated with questioning what being the sole authority to knowledge might mean for education in a democratic society. He told me that it was “mind-boggling” for him to think that “someone *wouldn’t* think that this [P4C] is suitable for primary [schools]”, or how someone might think that it was “too dangerous or risky” and might result in giving students “a big head [inflated ego]”. What this suggests is that his teaching practice is imbued with a sense of how he might act to challenge such maxims through his engagement with P4C. In raising his students’ self-esteem and as a result, seeing “their willingness to participate across the curriculum”, John becomes a living part of this act of challenging:

John: ... Deep down what you're doing is giving them a sense of "I respect you, I value your opinion as much as I value the guy that got ten out of ten in his Irish spelling".

This point becomes clear through the fact that John does not see himself as external to the distillation of a sense of value and equality that is so meaningful to his teaching practice. He told me that he "learns every time" he conducts a P4C session, that he sees himself as "always improving", and that the "confidence it gives them helps them across the curriculum". John's actions to challenge 'traditional' educational maxims are infused within his teaching practice, his engagement with P4C, and his understanding of the notions of education and democracy, of which he sees himself as an equal, valued and "genuine" component part:

John: ... the fact that they feel absolutely valuable and, you know, *equal* to me as a teacher and to the other children, gives them a sense of "you know what, I can kind of do *anything*".

The contradiction here lies not between a traditional outlook on the aims and purposes of education and that of the 'slow burn' outlook central to P4C methodologies, but rather with the choices available to teachers, and how far they view their responsibility to reach beyond their classroom walls. The contradiction located here involves John and Joan's practice of P4C affecting them and their students, and how deeply it permeates teaching, when there is a collation of understanding of one's role as both teacher and citizen. The imagery of the walls of a classroom is a suitable metaphor when interpreting this point. It reflects the gravity of how a teacher perceives and makes choices around the various constraints imposed within their classroom, itself bound by a curriculum concerned with educating for the world beyond those walls. This metaphor is fitting, also, in that it concerns how these teachers understand the effect of their actions – are they confined solely within the walls of their

classroom or do they reach out beyond them?; as well as the walls themselves – are they draped in the colourful artworks and pictures that celebrate the students within as citizens as *beings*, the door open and the discussion within echoing down the hallway? Or do they stand impervious to this colour, displaying the pre-approved charts and knowledge sets needed for educating a workforce that awaits the students it contains within as citizens as *becoming* (Lister, 2005). This was the major point of contradiction I located amongst the salient exchanges with participants.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis and interpretation of the data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with six teachers over a period of seven months. One of these teachers' interviews, Aiden, did not feature after the first phase of analysis that generated concepts representative of the research question. The Educate Together schools that participated in the study were described, with a particular focus on the main research school – the 'lived' school. The background to each of the interview participants was presented, along with a description of the relationship between researcher and research participant. The analysis process was explained, which detailed the three phases of coding of the data – Surveillance, Salience and Resonance – and aimed to listen carefully to participants' responses in order to hear and represent sensitively and accurately what was of importance to them in their practice of P4C.

The key points of analysis revealed layers of congruence, divergence and contradiction amongst participant interviews. There was deep congruence between some participants with regard to their experience teaching in Educate Together schools when compared to their previous teaching experiences in what might be considered more established denominational school communities in

Ireland. There was also congruence towards participants seeing P4C ‘fitting in’ with their daily school activities, particularly via Educate Together’s Learn Together curriculum. A final point of congruence was found through some participants’ encouragement of collaborative discussion within their classrooms underscored by broader views on education and democracy that goes beyond merely ‘permitting’ children to discuss and question during class time. Two main points of divergence were found amongst participants – P4C as a pedagogy for sharing, listening and dialogue, and P4C providing opportunities for equality – suggesting that P4C is integral to how some of the participants view their role as a teacher in an Educate Together school. One major point of contradiction concerns how engagement with P4C relates to participants’ teaching practice, particularly in regards to John and what being the sole authority to knowledge might mean for education in a democratic society. The way John is both *affected* by and *affects* his students through his P4C practice – that his practice affects him personally and in turn he affects the children in his class through his actions – along with the fact that this is as important to him as a teacher as it is for his students, indicates a valuation of the thoughts and opinions of children as a central purpose within a broader outlook towards education and democracy.

These key points of analysis suggest a certain connection between how participants viewed their P4C practice and their roles as Educate Together teachers with regard to education and democracy in Ireland. This connection is explored and discussed in the next chapter, where it is argued that P4C in an Educate Together context enables a space where teachers are integral to the idea of education and democratic living.

CHAPTER SIX:

‘Becoming’ Democratic Through P4C in an Educate Together Context

Introduction

This chapter builds upon my interpretation of the results presented in the previous chapter in light of the literature reviewed and my research question:

What insights into education and democracy can be gained from a lived enquiry into teachers’ perspectives on P4C practice in a group of Irish Educate Together primary schools?

This chapter focuses on discussing the extent to which P4C practice and the Educate Together movement might embody educational and democratic ideals in the context of contemporary social and political discourses on education in Ireland. I argue that there exists discernible and previously unexplored links between P4C and the Educate Together movement in Ireland in regards to notions of childhood. I investigate and examine the relationship between dialogue and child-centredness at the heart of both of these movements by considering the insights offered into education and democracy in Ireland through the lived perspective of Educate Together teachers that engage in P4C practice. The significance of teachers’ creating an experimental space is discussed, providing grounds from which to articulate P4C in an Educate Together context through education and democratic living. In examining interrelations like these, reference is made throughout to the research data. How participants view their classroom actions and their understandings of education and democracy in Ireland brings into focus the individual teacher’s actions and

perspectives. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the potential impact of this relationship on wider discourses surrounding education and democracy in Ireland.

P4C and Educate Together Contexts

A teacher's attitude and views about democracy impact on their classroom practice – the perspective and experience of teachers and how they understand and cultivate democracy within their classrooms is an important piece of the equation in the development of a “more participatory, empowered and engaged citizenry, thereby safeguarding a democratic society” (Zyngier, 2001: p.2-3). Although there was certain divergence amongst the views of teachers in this study regarding the aims and purposes of their P4C practice, I got the impression that very little distinction was being made between *learning about* and *enacting* democracy in their classrooms. They told me that they felt to some degree or other that their schools actively encouraged and enabled participation with democratic values and practices, to the point where participants were comfortably at ease to be able to focus on philosophical discussion during normal class time.

The relaxed sense of confidence and freedom to be able to do this indicates a significant effect of the Educate Together context. This can be seen in several instances throughout the analysis, most poignantly through the fact that each of the research participants made it clear that teaching in their current Educate Together school was a markedly more positive experience than their previous non-Educate Together experience, referencing their professional freedom and autonomy as teachers. In his interview, Declan, the teaching principal, said “I possibly would have given up teaching had there only been those schools [non-Educate Together schools]. I couldn't have done it”. Similarly Joan told me that “it's been really interesting” for her “coming to

teach in a very different environment” compared to the non-Educate Together schools she worked in before, where “to have tried to do something like that [P4C]” in her previous teaching experience “would have been very very difficult”. Generally speaking, the atmosphere within participants’ particular Educate Together schools seems to have had a substantial impact on how they both view and practice P4C and, more broadly, their enactment of education and democracy.

Democracy has been a central value of the Educate Together organization since its beginnings (see Chapter One “Education in Ireland: Emergence of the Educate Together Movement”, p.28-32). The key principles highlighted by parents back in 1974 in the hope that such values would underpin the type of multi-denominational school they sought, delineated that the proposed school should be child-centered, co-educational, democratically-run and multi-denominational, with a management committee that would be predominantly democratic in character, with the term “democratically-run” schools included in the Educate Together Charter launched in 1990. More recently there have been one or two critical amendments, such as the replacement of the term “multi-denominational” with “equality-based” (Educate Together, 2017). These amendments shifted the Educate Together nexus from a democratic management committee towards the idea of being “democratically-run”, with explicit reference to equality. These principles, and specifically the principle of democracy, have remained at the center of the Educate Together philosophy since the movement began. The fact that there has been strong parental involvement in Educate Together from its beginnings and which continues to play a prominent role in its ongoing development is a further indicator of the movement’s democratic character. Parents are partners in the movement’s development and not merely as fundraisers or followers of the school philosophy. The character of a movement like Educate Together is built upon

certain democratic and educational ideals and supported through its schools. This is apparent through its policies, practices and statements, but how that democratic character translates into practice inside its school walls on a daily basis is not so easily observable. Some of the participants in this research expressed an awareness of this democratic character being less-than-visible. John spoke about how the “energy” that a “group of humans, never mind children” could get from “just wanting to sit down and discuss something” was something he found very “moving and powerful”.

In terms of how a democratic character translates into practice inside school walls, Devine (2005) investigated teacher attitudes to the changing ethnic profile of non-Educate Together schools. She found that “[t]eachers’ responses were complex and underpinned by a feeling of ambiguity and insecurity about what they were doing” (Devine, 2005: p.65). She also found a “need to develop more inclusive practices, coupled with an uncertainty over how best to proceed” (2005: p.65). This uncertainty is, however, according to Devine, impossible to divorce from the policy vacuum implemented by the Irish state within which teachers were working. This is contrary to Lalor’s (2013) study which found that the Educate Together teachers he interviewed considered “working in such a value driven environment” to be “important to their practice” and that “these rather abstract ideas were given voice and action in their contexts” (2013: p.5). Lalor gives examples of how these values were practiced, both implicitly and explicitly, so that they could be enacted in the schools:

Examples of explicit practices included inclusive, non-discriminatory enrolment policies and the fostering of democratic partnerships with parents and students involved in school policies and decision making through parent/teacher committees and student councils... Examples of democratic practices in the schools included situations where children were often involved in making group decisions, in evaluations, in determining

the direction their learning took and were involved in devising procedures for classroom management and models of positive behaviour. Democratic principles were also enacted through the encouragement of parental involvement in the school (2013: p.5).

Aside from the differing contexts between Devine's and Lalor's studies (Devine's research did not involve Educate Together teachers), my research differs through the critical addition of the practice of P4C. The things that participants talk about through the social relationships in this study reveal insights into what it is about P4C in an Educate Together context that implies an active albeit delicate understanding of education and democracy, which I call democracy as 'becoming'. By this, I mean a view of democratic citizenship that is unfolding, emergent and child-centered, one that lies at the heart of education. Democracy as 'becoming' holds that teaching and working in a child-centered way can expand and extend democratic ideas and practices through the "deep connection between childhood and our still open and best possibilities" (Dunne, 2008: p.272). Affording children opportunities to speak, to act and to be listened to demands a trust in children and their cogency necessary for an open, renewing and *renewable* view of democracy as emergent. What children become are what adults allow them to become, a fact that emphasizes how such opportunities can be easily closed down to children (Dunne, 2008). This should serve as a reminder that recognizing and responding to the fecundity disclosed in childhood contributes to a renewal of the whole of society, and working in child-centered ways as a path towards emergent democratic ideas.

Democracy as becoming is also built from the sense throughout this study of participants 'talking through' or 'playing out' their thoughts about educating the children in their care democratically. For instance, John spoke about how he was scared to look back on his approach to teaching earlier in his career before he started practicing P4C, wondering "how did [he] participate" when the

children asked him questionings, opening up possibilities for dialogue. He told me he “kind of shudder[s] about how much opportunity [he] would have lost back then before starting this practice”. He talked about how he considers primary education as a “foundation for the child” which would be weakened without “a concern for democracy and an understanding of what it is”, and how he thinks the practice of P4C directly affects wanting to participate and become “actively engaged in the local community”. Clearly for John there is a strong emphasis on action and participation within his understanding of democracy as an Educate Together teacher. Merriam viewed democracy in terms of being open to questions and questioning with her students, for them to “question everything that they are told” and “to not follow the crowd”. These extracts raise questions about what kind of view towards education and democracy the participants of this study hold as they ‘talk through’ their actions in their classrooms. What aspects of P4C operating within an Educate Together context gives rise to these teachers viewing their practice in the way that they do? This talking through arose in the space opened up by the interviews that were approached in the spirit of dialogue. This was characteristic of the relationships sought out and developed through my lived enquiry. By articulating and extrapolating the lived perspectives of these teachers, and listening closely to the sentiments expressed in their interview excerpts, a distinctive picture of education, democracy and citizenship in the Irish Educate Together context was revealed.

Shared Principles of P4C and Educate Together

For the participants of this study, the deliberative and dialogical aspect of P4C is a central feature of their actions and practice in their classrooms. The majority of the teachers interviewed saw their practice of P4C strongly related to the idea of democratic values, education and citizenship. In John’s case, this

was an explicit and purposeful move – he told me that democracy for him means “that they [children] feel empowered”, that they “feel like they have something of value to share, whatever it is”, and that they “feel like its ok to join committees and organizing committees, whatever it may be around the country”. He said that “all of these things” are “what society needs”, “just coming together as opposed to just one person telling you what to do”. I believe this shows a genuine sense that John’s P4C practice relates intimately to broad values consistent with education, democracy and citizenship. However, as seen in Chapter Two, there can be differing and perhaps even conflicting views of what democracy is and what it should or should not entail.

Given P4C’s various emphases on dialogue (Gregory, 2007; Lipman, 2003), listening and participation (Haynes, 2009), and enquiry (Golding, 2012; Kennedy, 2012), there is evidence to suggest that interpretations of democratic and citizenship education residing within the realm of P4C are discursive, collaborative, open and pluralistic in character. Through the prominence of discussion and collaboration within P4C as practiced in Educate Together schools, alongside the priority afforded to engaging and taking part within Educate Together, I had previously based the linkage between both movements on interrelated yet distinct interpretations of democracy, those of deliberative and participatory respectively. However, after reflecting upon the research interview extracts and listening to how participants were attempting to voice and ‘play out’ their thoughts about their P4C practice, it became apparent that P4C has more in common with Educate Together than not when it comes to education and democracy. There are what I consider the common or shared principles of dialogue and child-centredness which couple these two movements, seen through this ‘playing out’ by participants, and from which my research suggests that something new is being created regarding understandings of democracy.

However, before looking at this, it may be useful to briefly specify what is meant by democratic education and citizenship education. According to Busoi (2015) “[b]uilding citizenship consciousness implies creating through education a sense of belonging to a community, wherever and whichever that is” (2015: p.19). In the broadest possible terms, the distinction I make between these two educational approaches is that citizenship refers to the *ends* of education whilst democracy refers to the *means*. This is reflected in Lawy and Biesta’s (2006) notion of “citizenship-as-achievement” and “citizenship-as-practice” – the former is based on the idea that citizenship is a status, a badge of honour that is achieved only after one has traversed a particular developmental and educational trajectory. The latter, however, believes that citizenship-as-achievement is exclusionary of children and young people, and instead opts for making no distinction between citizens and *not-yet-citizens* in an effort to include everyone in society, even young people, through citizenship-as-practice. This citizenship-as-practice idea can be seen to strike a definite chord with Educate Together’s pluralist and egalitarian politicized notion of child-centeredness. By adopting a citizenship-as-practice view the processes in which young people learn the value of democratic citizenship can be experienced:

Such an inclusive and relational outlook would respect the claim to citizenship status of everyone in society, including children and young people, and recognise that it is the actual practices of citizenship (citizenship-as-practice) and the ways in which these practices transform over time that are educationally significant (Lawy and Biesta, 2006: p.48).

By focusing on the condition of citizenship as Biesta (2011) does, the difference between democratic education and citizenship education can be seen in the shift away from the prevailing approaches of *teaching citizenship* (where young people are seen as isolated individuals) towards *making democracy*, where they are seen as young people-in-context (that is, existing in a relationship with the social, economic, cultural and political conditions of their

lives) learning to live democratically through democratic means brought about by the partnership of P4C and Educate Together. It is in this monochromatic sense that democracy and citizenship are considered within the context of Educate Together teachers' perspectives on their views and practices of education in general, and P4C specifically. In this regard, democracy and citizenship here are aligned with Biesta's, whereby "children and young people learn democracy through their engagement in the practices and processes that make up their everyday lives" (2011: p.17). With this distinction between democratic education and citizenship education in mind, I will now examine firstly the shared territory of dialogue, and then child-centeredness that exists between P4C and Educate Together.

*Dialogue – deliberation and participation in P4C & Educate Together contexts
(cited from Mirriam, John and Jemma)*

Biesta's (2011) advocacy for a shift from teaching citizenship to learning democracy brings forward a more solid footing from which to make sense of a dialogical and discursive common ground central to a P4C and an Educate Together paradigm. The openness to challenging discourse that is characteristic of P4C's methodology is evident in Kennedy's (2012) reference to Lipman's Community of Philosophical Inquiry as a "guided, open structured, dialogical speech community" (2012: p.36). P4C's vision aims at a democratic or ideal speech community; Lipman himself intended his method of practice to develop students' capacities for reasoning, logic and social dispositions, achieved through adult mediated dialogue between children, which, he argued, would improve "the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making" (Burgh, 2014: p.22). The pedagogy of P4C does not initiate or prepare a child for life as a citizen according to a predetermined idea of what such a citizen is. Instead, it enables open discussion through democratic practices for the child to discover the value as well as the goal of such practice

in the first place, thus grounding Dewey's view that "theory should develop out of and then inform practice" (Hildreth, 2012: p.298). According to Burgh (2014), the environment in which people (both adults and children) live is a social one, where collaboration and enquiry are emphasised in order to overcome problematic issues, where reform is viewed as a social process that contains educative potential, providing an opportunity to deliberate on the formulation of policies.

Lipman, having built his P4C programme upon Dewey's ideal of thinking, community, autonomy and democratic citizenship through the classroom community of enquiry, saw his project as the "embryonic intersection of democracy and education" (1991: p.249). Burgh (2014) says that the community of enquiry as a teaching practice must fit with democracy by supporting "a collaborative form of inquiry that encourages the social communication and mutual recognition of interests" (2014: p.38). This he bases on Dewey's emphasis on "social integration as a communicative and argumentative consensual process" that is also an educative process (2014: p.38). Burgh believes that the basis for developing practices that would enable students to explore core concepts associated with democracy and citizenship "needs to take into account the primacy of deliberative democracy" (2014: p.40). This may well be so – a discernable dialogical characteristic existent within P4C is unmistakable. However, in an effort to find a bridge between P4C and Educate Together, my earlier emphasis on a distinction between deliberative interpretations of democracy by P4C on one hand and participatory interpretations by Educate Together on the other I felt did not do justice to the kind of democracy that the children within participants' classrooms were engaging with.

A major point of congruence to emerge from this study concerns how participants spoke about encouraging collaborative philosophical discussion in

their classrooms. This encouragement centred around different things for each participant – Merriam mentioned her desire to establish P4C in her classroom so it “becomes part of the classroom environment or the classroom community”, so that “*that’s* how we speak to each other, *that’s* how we listen to each other”. She also talked about the idea of children being “allowed” to speak – “giv[ing] them [children] more of a voice in the classroom”, something she felt “traditionally [teachers] try *not* to encourage”. She mentioned that children being able to voice their disagreement or express views that question what might be considered normal or conventional was important to her – for them “to be able to say ‘well you know, I don’t agree with you’, and to feel safe in saying that, that it’s ok to say that”, to “express their opinion safely and to bring that with them while having a respect for the other person’s opinion as well”. For John, the idea of giving children a voice is a powerful basis for the type of democratic community life he visualises. He told me that his P4C means “your self-esteem and your self-image is that of a person who can share their opinion in a group and who feels that it’s ok to share their opinion and who feels like they might have good ideas going forward about how things could be done or how you could help or assist or how you could be part of the community”. From the perspective of teachers like these, the openness and discursivity that they actively encourage in their classrooms and schools does not mean subscription to a purely deliberative or participatory interpretation of democracy – there seems to be a deeper and inclusive ‘community’ idea being played out in some of the interview exchanges that moves beyond a simple deliberative/participatory divide. I consider this aspect to be central to the notion of democracy as ‘becoming’, where new understandings of democracy are produced through P4C in an Educate Together context determined through the attentive and responsive listening essential to community co-educational ideas (Haynes, 2013).

P4C incorporates Dewey's ideas on democracy and community by looking to "expand outwards to connect with other communities that lead to mutual transformations and growth" (Bleazby, 2006: p.48). In his seminal *Democracy and Education*, Dewey notes that "schools are better adapted ... to make disciples [rather] than inquirers" (2004 [1916]: p.364) in his condemnation of the over-reliance on academic subject and performance measures to the detriment of community engagement and social life in contemporary schools. P4C's view of citizenship, then, takes inspiration from its Deweyan roots, emphasising philosophical and dialogical enquiry and democratic participation with academic subject matter. The commitment by Educate Together to an ethical educational and child-centered ethos embodies an inclination towards similar ideas on inclusivity and discursiveness, seen in its Learn Together Ethical Education curriculum (Educate Together, 2017). A key function of how Educate Together operates is through active participation and discussion with parents, teachers and the wider school community (Rowe, 2006).

A responsibility to democratically-run schools is a main tenet of the Educate Together ethos, where boards of management are obliged to operate in a democratic fashion, carefully balancing the proactive involvement of parents in school policy whilst affirming the role of the teacher (Rowe, 2006). That something new may emerge through an Educate Together context is aided largely by the fact that the Educate Together movement has been built from the ground up – solving problems, initiating and inventing with ethical principles in view as it developed as an educational alternative to counter the existent authoritarian model of denominational schools of the time.

Taken collectively then, these ideals do not necessitate moving the needle towards either a deliberative or a participatory interpretation of democracy within the Educate Together movement. There is a dialogical aspect existent

either explicitly or implicitly in how Educate Together operates itself as an organisation, how it advocates the running of its schools and the teaching that goes on within the classrooms of those schools. Participants in this research expressed their willingness and desire to include a multiplicity of voices to participate philosophically and dialogically in their classrooms. For example, Jemma considered the discussion in her classroom to open a space for children to speak and to be heard – she told me that “there’s that *want* for fairness, in the sense that *all* children bring something to the classroom but not all children are always heard”. Making reference to a sensitivity towards relations of power associated with P4C, she said “philosophy always gave me the opportunity to allow every child to have a say”, for children to “not be overpowered by people who think that their way is the right way or that have more to say. The floor is open”. In John’s case, the dialogue and discussion he promotes enables his classroom to be a democratic community in action, where he believes there is a “coming together” of “many voices” and for “many opportunities for those many voices to be heard and for change”. John felt that his P4C practice allowed the children in his class to “feel absolutely valuable, and you know, *equal* to me as a teacher and to the other children”, giving them “a sense of ‘you know what, I can kind of do *anything*’”. He also made the point that when adults consciously pursue competency-based approaches to education such as performance metrics, learning “objectives” or “any of that silliness”, the “children are *also* conscious” of it, making them “uptight” and “tense”. His approach to P4C was very relaxed and calm, exemplifying the idea of P4C representing “just a fully valued input from that child”.

From my own observations of his class, John’s P4C sessions constituted a reciprocal dialogic community between children, and children with adults. The strong dialogic undercurrent within both P4C and Educate Together surpasses a more schematic distinction between deliberative and participatory views of

democracy, pointing towards a more nuanced sense of education and democracy in action. The implications of this combined with the other shared principle between P4C and Educate Together, child-centeredness, is explored now.

Child-centredness – Advancing inclusivity in democratic contexts (cited from Declan and Mirriam)

As discussed above, the P4C/Educate Together dynamic does not rest on a distinction between deliberative/participatory democracy. This is because it does not include the dialogic, inclusive, ‘on-going’ type of democracy in action that is espoused by the Educate Together movement and acted upon by the teachers in their schools. Instead, I have focused on dialogue and child-centeredness as shared principles between P4C and Educate Together. I do not view them as separate – rather, I see them as intertwined, reciprocal with one another. Collaborative adult-child dialogue deepens more thoroughgoing notions of child-centeredness. In this respect, what I mean by ‘child-centeredness’ here is the idea that adults and teachers do not just take a step back from the centre of educational operations, but are actively engaged in a dialogical relationship *that is led* by children. As seen in Chapter Two, child-centeredness is a central tenet of the Educate Together movement. Stemming from the inclusivity evident within their core values and ethos, child-centeredness advances further along the path beaten by inclusion in education by explicitly placing concern for the child as a person at the centre of all activity. It acknowledges, certainly at a general level, that schools are generally speaking not level playing fields between adults and children, and students and teachers when it comes to authority (Haynes, 2016).

Inclusion in education has been broadly defined in terms of educating *all* children in regular schools that had previously excluded them. Many of the concerns that characterize inclusion in education focus on disability, race or

social class (Terzi, 2014). However, I mention it here in terms of a starting point from which child-centered approaches might advance. In this way, the idea of inclusion relates to child-centeredness through the relative ‘power-consciousness’ and dynamic of the school. Schools are power-sensitive places – pupils do not share the same rights and responsibilities of power with teachers (Haynes, 2008). Haynes (2016) notes, “institutional authority does not just disappear when teachers opt for alternative methods [of teaching]” (Haynes, 2016: p.261). Institutional authority in schools is inescapable, at least at some level, by virtue of everyone’s democratic right and compulsion to take part in education, conferred by the state on the school to provide for reasons of both protection and control. Haynes (2008) suggests “[t]his authority might be overt (like in more traditional forms of education), or covert (like in more progressive forms of education), or indeed lie with the teacher attempting to empower students through deconstruction of the educational process itself, sometimes referred to as transformative pedagogy” (Haynes, 2008: p.2). However, in adopting and embracing child-centred approaches, certain possibilities open up for how teachers and educators might orchestrate their activities, creating sensitivity to power relations and opportunities for the building of dialogical speech communities.

Similar sentiments of child-centeredness seen through a lens of inclusivity are reflected by the participants in this research, many of who viewed their P4C practice in an Educate Together setting along equitable lines. For instance, Declan told me that he “firmly believ[es] that you don’t need to be teaching morals and right and wrong through fear of religion”. Every time he puts up the core value of the month at his school assembly, he believes he is “righting a wrong” from his own experience of traditional forms of education – one in which children’s questions were disregarded, silenced or suppressed. This he does by “just making a slight little change based on ideals”. When he

started in an Educate Together school, he “[thought] that there’s a little bit missing in our ethical curriculum” (see Chapter One – Educate Together within an Irish Educational Context, p.47-50) and that it “needs another part”. By weaving it into his school curriculum, Declan considers P4C to be “within the spirit of the ethos” of his school, believing that it is “the curriculum that determines the ethos”. Thus the “missing piece in the ethical curriculum could bleed through every lesson” because “that is the spirit, that *is* ethos”. In the same way, John told me that he discovered P4C after “always looking for avenues with which to engage children” and, having been introduced to P4C, thought “this is exactly what I’ve been thinking – ... how to get children not to ‘behave’ in a certain way, but how to interact with each other in a *certain* way or to experience education in a *different* way”. It was striking to see how John’s P4C practice involved dialogue between the children in his class without the need or expectation to defer to John as their teacher. They did not seek nor was there the expectation that they *should* seek his intervention or authority. Their dialogue flowed like a river, twisting and turning as it encountered obstacles, as John listened intently, occasionally interjecting to share a viewpoint or an idea. Merriam told me that her P4C practice “help[s] me a bit more as a teacher ... to actually connect a bit more with the children rather than just asking ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’ questions”. She spoke about P4C in terms of children’s well-being, “where we teach children that they have a voice, that they have value ... that it’s ok to say no, to be different”. She said, “that then is the ethos of Educate Together, you know, difference”, and although “we [Educate Together teachers] celebrate them [differences], we applaud them” she asked “even though that’s our ethos, how much of it actually happens with kids?”. She expressed concern that “they’re [children] still very much influenced by outside forces as well, things that we [teachers] have no control over”. From my own experience visiting the Educate Together schools in this study, especially the lived school, I felt a definite sense of the regard for including everyone involved in the school

community – parents, teachers and staff, but most especially children, and how they should feel valued; that essentially everything that happens on a daily basis was because of the children in the school, a shared consciousness of the reassurance of knowing that children are the focal point of all activity. The things that I said, what people said to me and to each other not only felt listened to but also that being listened to *itself* seemed to both constitute and create the palpable atmosphere of sharing and togetherness that echoed around the school. Through the shared territory of dialogue and child-centeredness, opportunities arise where individual activities and school practices become a unique, even restorative space for the teacher or practitioner of P4C in an Educate Together context. The dynamic and nature of this type of space is investigated in the next section, with particular attention paid to how the balance of such a space reverberates deeply with notions of education and democracy in Ireland by examining how participants, standing at the threshold of the two, perceive their actions.

Education and the Democratic life

Having examined a connection between P4C and Educate Together in terms of the shared territory between dialogue and child-centeredness, the space created through the interrelationship between these two aspects is now explored. By opening a space in such contexts, questions emerge about education and democracy in Ireland based upon perspectives around P4C in Educate Together contexts. Subsidiary questions also arise – what role does a teacher's P4C practice have to play in their broader ideas of education and democracy, and how do these ideas relate to an Educate Together context, both as a movement in itself and as an educational body? How do practices and assurances to democratic ideals translate in terms of engaging in P4C and Educate Together as a site or a space where it is practiced? What form do P4C and Educate

Together democratic paradigms and notions of citizenship take in respect to teachers of children in Educate Together schools? Questions such as these call for fresh opportunities for thinking and engagement. These are addressed through the perspectives gained from my presence in the lived school, observations of the other schools I visited, and my continuous interactions with teachers, educationalists, academics and others enthused by the idea of P4C and philosophy in Irish schools generally. One such phenomenon is that of ‘Thinking Time’.

Thinking Time – Philosophical Dialogue in Irish Educate Together Classrooms
(cited from Declan and John)

‘Thinking Time’ (Donnelly, 1998) is the term used to describe P4C by several teachers and staff within the lived school and some of the other schools I visited. The emphasis in Thinking Time is on dialogue as an art form, where an alert and aware type of listening, rather than merely hearing and waiting until one’s turn to speak, paves the way for the unfolding drama (Donnelly, 1998). According to Donnelly (1998), a big advantage of the Thinking Time model for engaging in philosophy with children is that the children can communicate with each other without having to defer to the teacher. Using the metaphor of an old telephone exchange Donnelly describes teachers’ roles in what has been considered ‘classroom discussion’ previously:

The role of the teacher in what is sometimes called classroom discussion (in which he or she chooses the speaker and each child speaks through him or her) often reminds me of the role of the operator in the telephone exchanges before technology gave us direct lines. Many telephone operators are now redundant and I have no desire to see that happen to classroom teachers. Rather they might reflect on their own role in the classroom (Donnelly, 1998: p.79).

Donnelly's Thinking Time session involves many of the same processes and procedures as might be seen in other various P4C activities, such as moving desks to allow chairs to be arranged in a circle, selecting a topic for discussion, questioning and reflecting on the topic and others' contributions etc. (Donnelly, 2002). Crucially however, there is "[n]o vote of conclusion ... reached. The thoughts and questions are left open. The teacher acts as facilitator to the discussion, contributing when appropriate (Donnelly, 2002: p.280-281), focusing on underlying pedagogical themes such reflection, openness and children circling around a topic inclusively.

Many of the P4C sessions that I observed did not follow Donnelly's exact process to the letter (see Appendix 08). There were variations on the theme, ranging from the use of a speaking object rather than children 'tipping' one another to signify who speaks next; the use of different stimuli such as picturebooks, news events and stories; or the extension of the discussion over several days. Generally speaking, although there were certain similarities between the P4C sessions I observed, most certainly between John, Declan and Aiden's Thinking Time session, in practice teachers adapted and varied their P4C practice in all kinds of ways according to their settings. Declan showed me a bookcase he had put in the staffroom that contained a shelf full of picturebooks. Each book contained a plastic pocket with a sheet of suggested philosophical questions he had typed up for his fellow teachers to use during their own P4C session. He told me his fellow teachers only use his resources occasionally, preferring mostly to pose a question to their class and allow the ensuing dialogue to flow freely. Declan told me that P4C for him "is a fine-tuning of methodologies", a "tweaking" of what "teachers would be doing" already. By just "start[ing] to tweak things slightly, some methodologies and pedagogies that you're [teachers] using, you'd only have to tweak it slightly to push it into the area of philosophy and that type of questions and discussions".

Aiden, a teacher in Declan's school, saw P4C as "a good thing for teachers" as well as children, particularly in regards to offering opportunities for imagination and imaginative thinking. In John's case, his P4C practice was inspired specifically by meeting and listening to Josephine Russell (2007) at the launch of her book about her exploration of children's moral development through the medium of Thinking Time. John said that "everything she was saying was just what I was thinking" and "from that moment I just thought 'I'm not going to let this moment pass without immediately trying to initiate it into my own class'". John believes his P4C practice "definitely fosters a kind of an atmosphere of relaxation in your own skin, in your own thoughts and what's coming out of you". He told me that P4C "is a method of teaching, a method of learning more importantly, that *does* engage everyone", that "it is a form for them to express themselves, for them to have the stage, for them to have a turn, for them to be *listened* to, particularly by their peers and their teachers". He talked about what he called "bingo moments", where a child "that doesn't or won't engage or is afraid to engage but is happy to listen" eventually "want[s] to share some opinion or they want to initiate some discussion by coming up to you quietly and giving you a note saying they'd love to talk about this [subject] or they'd love the group to talk about this [topic]".

The Thinking Time variation within individuals' P4C practice in Educate Together schools is almost certainly a result of the cultural nuances of the Irish educational system, where there remains a litany of curricular requirements, assessment measures and policy constraints, which must be negotiated by Educate Together teachers and non-Educate Together teachers alike in their daily tasks. What is intriguing about this occurrence, however, is the child-centered and discursive emphasis. Thinking Time is not confined to Educate Together and neither Russell nor Donnelly conducted their P4C practice in Educate Together schools. However, Thinking Time's dialogical approach

within an Educate Together explicitly democratically-run and child-centered context prompts deeper questions – What can be asserted about the occurrence of P4C in Irish Educate Together schools based on the perspectives of teachers who engage in such practice in their classrooms?

Social movements – opening spaces for democratic living (cited from Mirriam, John, Declan and Jemma)

By posing a question such as the above I am led to an idea central within the P4C/Educate Together connection – that both P4C (Haynes, 2018; Gregory, Haynes and Murriss, 2016.) and Educate Together might be considered as social ‘movements’. In political terms, social movements reflect:

...an ancient element of democratic theory that calls for an organization of collective decision making referred to in varying ways as classical, populist, communitarian, strong, grass-roots, or direct democracy against a democratic practice in contemporary democracies labelled as realist, liberal, elite, republican, or representative democracy (Kitschelt, 1993: p.15).

Barber (1984) stresses the centrality of social movements where conceptions of democracy emphasize the aspects of citizen participation and rational deliberation. Generally speaking, social movements are critical of the representative principle of delegation and traditional decision-making, based on majority voting. They demand more citizen participation and empowerment both informally in civil society and in the institutional settings of formal democracy. In order to achieve this, they promote and organize public spaces of reflection and debate where people who hold different views may exchange ideas and practices of democracy (Della Porta, 2013). In this political vein, one might have cause to ask if Educate Together can really be seen as a social movement, considering its incorporation as a company with a Board of Directors in 1998. However, Della Porta and Diani (2006) maintain that social

movements are a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engage in collective action such as: 1) being involved in “conflictual” relations with clearly identified opponents; 2) being linked by dense informal networks; and 3) sharing a distinct collective identity (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: p.20). By this account, Educate Together may well be considered a social movement, in terms of how it has adopted and adapted the idea of ethical education – the creation and distribution of papers, reports, research programmes, ethical education curricula (Learn Together), articles and public events organized that question and challenge various governmental and church dictates regarding ethical educational issues in Ireland; the organising of meetings and events open to the public where issues surrounding the provision and training of teachers in ethical education are discussed¹³; and a general, albeit unarticulated, sense amongst advocates and supporters of Educate Together of the identification of ethical education as a cornerstone of the movement itself.

However, in the main I focus my understanding of the idea of a social ‘movement’ on Haynes’ (2018) use of the term to describe “physical, cultural and political actions and collectives”, where the idea of ‘being moved’ is “to be taken to a different or enlarged place of thinking, and to be affected, emotionally, physically, spiritually or intellectually” (Haynes, 2018: p.2). In this way, the word ‘movement’ is a wholly appropriate way to portray the perspectives and experiences of individuals assembling and moving to-and-fro between different dialogues, discussions and meetings about P4C in different learning communities and contexts. Characteristic of this interpretation I believe is the idea of opening up ‘spaces’ for learning, in both a physical and metaphorical sense, that provide opportunities for democratic practices:

¹³ Ethical Education Network: <https://ethicaleducation.ie/>

The methods of P4C are an expression of democratic principles such as equality, freedom of thought and expression, inclusive participation and shared decision making through open deliberation (Haynes, 2016: p.282).

The idea of opening up spaces, deliberative and democratic, is prevalent within the P4C movement (Haynes and Murriss, 2013; Kizel, 2016, 2017; Paine, 2012; Vansieleghem, 2005). Lin and Sequeira (2017) believe:

The Community of Inquiry creates a space for the potential agreement and conflict endorsed by various divergent voices in the classroom. This fluid space of negotiation could lead students to reflect on relevant perspectives and thereby transforming their experiences and knowledge through dialogue and philosophical inquiry (Lin and Sequeira, 2017: p.xix-xx).

Kennedy (2017) assigns the term “a third space” as a descriptor for the multitude of interrogative, interlocutive and relational lenses created through Communities of Philosophical Inquiry, the distinctive pedagogical praxis of P4C (p.xi). This enables the provision of a space where conflict, rather than being avoided, is turned into dialogue and discussion “that [does not] fit the dominant story” (p.xi). Kennedy’s ‘third space’, an intersectional space “where difference, diversity, [and] our multiple identities are open for negotiation” (2017: p.xi), and Lipman’s “embryonic intersection of democracy and education” (1991: p.249), although firmly rooted in Lipman’s notion of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry, evokes deep parallels with P4C/Thinking Time operating in the Irish Educate Together context. This is through the interrelation between dialogue and child-centeredness. By way of their practice of P4C in Educate Together classrooms, participants in this study open spaces that enable a time and place for children’s voices not only to be heard, but also genuinely sought out – a common space where differences can be explored, celebrated even, curiosity fed and new ideas listened to and considered (Haynes, 2005). They conveyed the feeling that they are affording the children in their

classes the opportunity to participate *in* and *through* a democracy by deliberating and dialoging; a feeling that they as teachers encourage children to share perspectives by listening and engaging in critique with one another and with the teacher. For instance, Merriam told me that a motivation for her for engaging in P4C was that “it would help me a bit more as a teacher”, and that “that’s [P4C] the way I’d like to change, that I’m not so focused on a specific answer from the children that I would like [to hear], and I would like to know more about the children from their answers”. She spoke about how she hoped doing P4C with her class would “make for a more harmonious class”, expressing uncertainty about discussion amongst her class when she said “what I find difficult for them is they don’t know when to speak and when not to speak”. Rather than feeling restricted by curricular obligations, she actively seeks to initiate dialogue within her classroom, but not purely for professional or learning development. John talked about the type of discussion he aims for in his class by making comparisons with debates on TV, which, according to him, are usually unfair or biased in some way and only occasionally reveal good balanced dialogue, saying, “that’s what we’re [John’s class] going for. That’s what the kids should feel on a par with”. He was keen to assert that his P4C practice “is always child-led”, telling me that he does not “have to come up with the topics to talk about because there’s so many things [topics for P4C that his class come up with] every single day”, he just “notes [writes down] the topics we might talk about”. This is a source of huge inspiration for John, saying that, “it’s just amazing because you do become more conscious and they become more conscious, they challenge themselves to listen”.

Excerpts like these suggest that there are certain, albeit imprecisely articulated, themes that the participants share in terms of their professional outlook as teachers. They share a clear aspiration *not to be a more traditional or ‘didactic’ type of teacher or educator*. They also share an *approach to child-*

centeredness that stretches beyond the 'tokenistic', to be genuinely child-centered, rather than simply going through the motions of more outwardly visible instantiations, such as student councils for example. They also share a *spirit of 'open teaching'*, seeking to find ways to nurture an atmosphere of action within their classrooms that is democratic, both in terms of adult-child relationships and the way children learn. Participants also encouraged and fostered *deep questioning*, particularly Declan – his experience of having his own philosophical questioning shut down by teachers as a child in school fuelled his desire to introduce and encourage P4C in his school as an adult, telling me that a teacher engaging in P4C practice “[i]t is the spirit of your teaching, your whole vision for teaching”. He told me that his interest in P4C “very much came from me and the unanswered questions I had in my classroom and I never stopped asking them”. He said he still remembers the “annoyance and frustration” of “being given a deaf ear”. He told me that for him “[t]he point of it [P4C] is, it is the spirit, the theme of your talking and discussion is that ‘teachers don’t have all the answers’”. This points clearly at another shared theme, namely the idea of *adult fallibility*, an idea central in both P4C and in terms of a *non-authoritarian* approach to education encouraged by the Educate Together movement. The open questioning and discussion where teachers and adults must be prepared to embrace challenges to their beliefs from others, particularly children, and integrate a spirit of deep questioning into their pedagogical approach, form a large part of Declan’s outlook towards his P4C practice. John in particular appropriated these aspects through his practice – he told me that, “I don’t know if it’s intended to be, but it is a form for them [children] to express themselves, for them to have the stage, for them to have a turn, for them to be *listened to*, particularly by their peers and their teachers”. Jemma talked about her P4C practice in terms of her own professional development as a teacher and being the sole voice of authority in the classroom – “[a]s a teacher if you’re afraid of being wrong and having no safety net, you

can *never* be wrong and you can never grow”. John views his P4C practice as actively encouraging democratic participation – he hoped that the children in his class “feel valued enough to think ‘I’m important as well, I have something to give and I’d be happy to work in a group’”. After he spoke about how amazed he was after one particular discussion he had with his class, where the children had chosen to discuss a chapter from Irish history by focussed on the rightness or wrongness of two opposing sides during the 1916 Easter Rising, he told me that “had they not had a structure for sharing their opinions and an opportunity or feeling of equality, there’s no way you would have had that... you have to have that structure in place and provide a space”.

As a proviso to these points however, it should be noted that the concept of child-centeredness in general, but specifically within the Educate Together movement, is not understood one-dimensionally. There are different emphases within the theme of child-centeredness from participants’ excerpts that focus on issues relating to citizenship, community, equality, pedagogy and the interspace between each. For instance, Aiden, although only just beginning his P4C practice with his class for the first time with the help and encouragement of his principal Declan, came across as firmly committed to introducing and developing P4C into his classroom from a school ethos point of view. He said “you do have hits and misses,” in terms of how he felt his practice was developing. When I asked him about the aims and purposes of his P4C practice relating to his school, Aiden told me “philosophy fits in really well with all of us [teachers]”, and with regard to his school’s ethos “the central thing ... kind of an unwritten thing ... would be openness... I definitely think it reflects our ethos”. John’s outlook wholeheartedly embraces moves towards building communities and learning for citizenship – he spoke about becoming “comfortable with that [idea], that your opinion is as valued as anyone else’s... if you feel that you are respected just for your opinion... it can only raise your

self-esteem and your willingness to participate across the curriculum”. He told me “you want people and children, teachers and family to know that you *don’t* have to just accept everything. You *can* challenge things. You can question things. You can look at things differently than you were taught...”, believing that “all of these things... make us better citizens”.

Although dispersed, the varied emphases within notions of child-centeredness expressed by the different participants in this research seem to point towards two levels of child-centeredness that I characterise amongst teachers within a P4C/Educate Together context: child-centeredness at a learning level and child-centeredness at a citizen level. An example of child-centeredness at a learning level might be a teacher engaging in self-directed or enquiry-based learning – participants in this study all share at some level an appreciation for child-led learning where the children in their class have a greater say in issues that affect them as a class and in the learning activities organised by the teacher. Child-centeredness at a citizen level however, moves beyond the learning level to focus on the child as a stakeholder in the school itself. It considers how those classroom activities are organised with a view towards children as citizens learning and developing in a democratic framework.

Participants in this research share certain aspects with one another in terms of how their notions of child-centeredness are interpreted and enacted. In spite, or perhaps *because* of this, from some of the participants, namely John, Merriam and Declan, I sensed a kind of tension that exists within their excerpts. This is in respect of how child-centeredness is expressed in their classrooms and their schools, a tension that was being played out verbally through our discussions and interview. By ‘tension’, I do not mean there are some underlying contradictions in what the participants said to me. Rather, some of the participants laboured to articulate how theory and practice sat side-by-side,

how notions of child-centeredness connected to their P4C practice with them personally. Declan said that P4C had “made it interesting” for him to be a teacher, that “it’s the part that gets [him] excited, that we’re giving them that forum, that sort of *voice* to the children”. For Declan, child-centeredness involves giving children the opportunity to question and discuss things that may otherwise not be possible in other school circumstances, to the point where it is something he tries to integrate into a living ethos that permeates throughout the school day. For Merriam, her child-centeredness revolved around the giving over of a certain amount of control to the children in her class – “I think you kind of have to let go of that control a little bit and allow the children to go off on little tangents and just let them explore”. She views her P4C practice in terms of improving her relationship with the children in her class by her taking a step back as the sole voice of authority in the classroom. John’s idea of child-centeredness starts with the individual child in his class and the protracted process of creating a discursive and inclusive atmosphere within his classroom with the aim of contributing and building a similar atmosphere outside his classroom. He said “it’s a slow process, that they don’t have to agree with someone they like or are friendly with”. Referring to the children in his class, he told me “[t]hey are very open to listening to others and that’s the kind of community and the kind of society that I want”. These excerpts highlight a kind of tension regarding what child-centeredness means for these participants engaging in P4C – in terms of their role as teachers with authority in their classrooms, and in terms of their notions of education and democracy and their views on children as citizens. The tension I sensed in this respect was not some sort of inner turmoil, rather it arose from a situation where I was putting questions to the participants that they had not been invited to articulate before, and which they did not have the chance to work out succinctly in their own minds yet. These tensions do, however, give the interviews a sense of the unexplored, a sense of the personal, of working out where as an individual

practitioner they view themselves within a larger educational and democratic sphere. I have no doubt that this point rests upon the Educate Together movement's unfixed interpretation of the notion of child-centeredness within its Charter (2015). Through my own experience of attending Educate Together conferences and seminars, there is a distinctive approach to CPD (Continuous Professional Development) where teachers are free to express and articulate their experimentation, encouraged to reflect on ideas encountered and to keep a open mind about them. The suggestion here is that notions of child-centeredness within P4C/Educate Together contexts are unbound when it comes to enacting and substantiating child-centred activity, allowing the individual teacher to act freely upon their interpretation of this value. The opportunity arising for these teachers in the P4C/Educate Together context is to instantiate democratic living and action in the now, as opposed to being geared towards the future, when children are old enough to be recognised as citizens proper by the state. The following section explores how an environment that focuses on and facilitates an atmosphere of child-centeredness such as Educate Together *with the addition of* P4C may open a certain type of space for education and democracy – one where adults and children work out together how to engage in democratic living through reciprocal dialogical approaches.

An Experimental Space of Democratic Living (cited from Mirriam, Joan and John)

Educate Together as a social movement incorporating school/s, parents, children, teachers and school community that enables P4C and collaborative philosophical practices echoes vaguely with Garratt and Piper's (2012) idea of a synergy between P4C and community philosophy, demonstrating:

... how to create a constellation of sites and intellectual spaces, formal and informal, where students and teachers can engage with members of the

community in a process of philosophical enquiry to address issues of contemporary significance (Garrett and Piper, 2012: p.80).

However, it must be stated that an integrated and synergetic relationship between P4C and Educate Together is *not* being suggested in this study. Rather, that the relationship between P4C practice and the Educate Together movement enables a unique space for democratic engagement. The vision of democracy of both of these movements is not one that is rigid or set in stone – it is fluid, fallible in character, built on possibility and open to interpretation on how best to enact these possibilities. In both cases, democracy is seen as an on-going project, always in the making. However, more importantly for both is the inclusion of children whom traditionally have been excluded from the conversation, thus adding another dimension to the idea of a democratic space and the renewal of democracy. The variation in how participants perceived their P4C practice in terms of education and democracy in Ireland reflects this fluidity. It is perhaps the rich nature of participants' diverse perspectives of P4C, extending to schools, community, pedagogy, childhood and democracy, which allow for a plurality of understanding of democracy in the first place. One of the research participants, John, expressed this idea of possibility within a broader interpretation of democracy in terms of community life, where listening and discussion between adults and children as enacted by him through his classroom P4C/Thinking Time is both a means and an end of his democratic aspirations. He told me that “education... [is] more of a foundation really, for the child. And I suppose without a concern for democracy and an understanding of what it is and of equality, their foundations would be weak, so it would follow”. He said “...your engagement and your willingness to participate, often it... means your self-esteem and your self-image is that of a person who can share their opinion in a group and who feels that it's ok to share their opinion and who feels like they might have good ideas going forward about how things could be done or how you could help or assist or how you could be part of the

community”. There is a clear aspiration from his interview that his practice is geared towards community and citizenship where children are a focal point. Such aspirations emphasize the importance of practitioner perspectives to the argument that P4C in an Educate Together context enables a unique child-centered space for democratic engagement.

As seen in Chapter Two, Fielding’s (2016) relational view of democracy offers a valuable lens through which to view the P4C/Educate Together context. In holding that functional human relations exist *for the sake* of the personal, Fielding (2016) believes that both the organisational arrangements and daily practices of a school become crucial to a school’s realisation of an education in and for democracy as a way of life. When I asked participants about their views on practicing P4C in relation to their individual school, the respondents viewed the relationship favourably. These responses were articulated differently and with different emphases. However, the idea that participants’ schools function to *enable* democratic living rather than democratic living being *as a result of how the schools are set up* is emergent from some of the interviews. For example, Dermot said that P4C “is an absolute fit for schools that are open to that”, seeing it as a way to “beef up the ethos” of his school “as opposed to the ethical curriculum”. Aiden said that “[p]hilosophy fits in really well with all of us”, referring to his fellow teachers in the school, due to a “kind of unwritten thing”, something he considered to be “openness”. He considered a “pillar of philosophy would be to be open, open to everything” because “it definitely reflects our ethos”. Alternatively, although Merriam thought that there is a connection between P4C and her school, she wasn’t sure as she “[hasn’t] ever discussed it with any of the other teachers”. Merriam mentioned to me that she prefers to eat her lunch in the classroom with the children rather than going to the staff room with her colleagues during lunchtime. Interestingly, Merriam on several occasions told me that the pedagogy of P4C is something that “teachers

are already doing”, unaware of the philosophical potential of their actions. She thought that dialogue, questioning and respectful listening should all be part of a teacher’s everyday classroom activity but that there is a need to see those things in philosophical terms. Joan’s experience of coming to her newly established Educate Together school was “really interesting” for her “coming to teach in a *very* different environment”. She thought that P4C is “something that’s going to frighten a lot of teachers and a lot of schools because it is opening up the classroom *way* more than a lot of teachers would be comfortable doing”. She thought that this was not the case so much in her school, however, telling me that “here, we do have a value of making sure we’re listening to the students”. John in particular stressed that having “talked to board of management [members] and all the way down [other parties involved in participant’s school] some people for sure don’t buy into it [P4C] at all”, but that the “*majority* of people in our school... would see the benefit even in the children's interaction around the school, and stuff like that”. John was keen to emphasis how his school clearly “espouse[s]... child-centredness and equality-basedness” through its ethos, where P4C “is a way to have them in action *in* the classroom” rather than “just outside parading under everyone getting to hold a meeting in a hall, like that's not equality, that’s just timetabling”.

From these extracts, it is possible to see the structural creativity that characterise aspirations of democracy, inclusion, participation and equality, initiated and developed by a dispositional energy and generosity of spirit that both invites and creates new forms and processes of encounter:

Whilst both structural form and creative human engagement ... are potentially interdependent and synergistic, it is the dispositional drive of democratic fellowship that animates existing forms of encounter and requires their transcendence (Fielding, 2016: p.124-125).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Thinking Time and social movements might go some way to explaining *how* communal philosophical spaces are created as a result of P4C in an Educate Together context – but not *why* an interrelation between them exists at all. Some attention, therefore, needs to be given to the delicacy of being *within* such a space, where the complexities of our democratic lives are encountered. By ‘democratic living’ what I mean is the ongoing encounters of democratic life, where the daily experiences of our lives are encountered in and by means of democratic spaces; where values of freedom, equality and fellowship are lived out through societal forces that both challenge and substantiate belief in those values, such as through traditions, plurality of community, and migration. In terms of education, such a space where adults and children are together allows new opportunities to surface that produce unique and delicate ways of democratic living that arise ‘from the ground up’ through the respectful listening and open questioning emergent from all of the voices in the classroom.

From several of the interviews in this study, most specifically in John’s, Miriam’s and Declan’s exchanges, there is a clear sense that some of the participants view their P4C practice as a way of making their schools and classrooms *genuinely* rather than ‘tokenistically’ democratic places. The setting in which they live and teach is understood in terms of children’s voices – sharing knowledge, being challenged and listening openly in order to give children in their classrooms and schools agency towards resolving issues that arise between them. Teachers in these settings seem to know that they do not wish to be the sole authority that presides over such issues. Fielding’s (2016) insight into the structures and dispositions required for aspirations of democracy I think applies to the P4C/Educate Together context in this way. According to him, Dewey’s broad understanding of democracy is seldom approached explicitly within publicly funded education, and if it is, it “tends to be

approached primarily as a set of organisational arrangements or consultative techniques” (Fielding, 2016: p.120). The participants of this research who practice P4C, although articulated vaguely and with differing emphases, represent a new or different understanding of democracy, a sense of its unfixed nature – that democracy is in fact ‘emergent’ as an ongoing project that is always in the making, of ‘becoming’ democratic. There is a sense that they are both *enacting* and *enabling the experience* of democratic living through the renewal of being present with children and being in dialogue with them – where being able to see a plurality of positions and viewpoints becomes habit. These matters lie at the heart of questions regarding what it is about child-centeredness that relates to discussions about democratic education and what it is about that kind of orientation that implies democratic living. Haynes (2008) makes the same case regarding what the consequences are of including children ‘in the now’, rather than preparing them for future citizenship by “provid[ing] a vehicle for exploring many of the issues that are synonymous with being a participating citizen of a democracy” (Haynes, 2008: p.116).

As seen in Chapter One, democracy within the Educate Together movement is in fact mentioned explicitly – establishing schools that are ‘democratically-run’ is one of four founding principles of the movement. The schools I visited throughout this research, the classrooms into which I was invited, I experienced as democratic places, places where democracy was at the core of daily activity. There was a similar generosity of spirit and disposition for freedom, fellowship and equality in each school, albeit expressed differently and with differing emphases. The unarticulated nature of participants’ P4C practice and how they aligned this practice with their educational outlooks, and the ethos of their particular school, suggests the same interrelation between Fielding’s relational view of democracy and a “companion education system that expresses and espouses its renewal and further development” (Fielding,

2016: p.122). The feeling common among participants in terms of affording children the opportunity to participate democratically by dialoguing on issues that concern their everyday experience as Educate Together students contains strong elements related to notions of ‘child’ central to P4C as well as Dewey’s idea of democracy as a way of life. These participants thus show that P4C in an Educate Together context creates a space for experimentation with the idea of democratic living and teaching between adults and children, one that offers a microcosmic view of the suggestion that “[i]f a more solid democracy is desired outside schools, democratic practices must be brought into them” (Kohan, 2014: p.35).

Community and fellowship within the Educate Together movement becomes key when it is considered as the main provider of schools where parents have a say in schools’ establishment, character and type of education offered within an education system that is overwhelmingly denominational, and where such denominationalism is in a near-monopolistic position. It is perhaps as a result of the equality-based fabric of Educate Together schools, that is, the central principal of “children of all denominations and none are equally welcome” (Educate Together, 2019: p.N/A), that participation and democratic engagement is promoted and supported. The practice of P4C in such a setting offers an organic instantiation of the possibility of democracy as something that *can* be lived and learned in schools. Fielding’s (2016) notion of democratic fellowship offers a way in which to understand how participants in this study are enabled by the creative organizational structure of Educate Together to become reflective practitioners, able to explore their “conceptualization and realization of democracy as a creative, humanly fulfilling way of life” (Fielding, 2016: p.127). This calls for greater discourse about P4C in Irish schools to focus broadly on the perspectives of Educate Together teachers, specifically on the nature of their P4C practice and the schools in which they teach, thus drawing

attention to what is happening democratically inside the walls of the classrooms, school buildings and communities where they are located. If the various component pieces of democratic practice, collaborative philosophical enquiry, adult-child dialogue, and values such as child-centeredness and children's voices are being encountered and explored, buoyed up by a spirit of democratic fellowship, then what is happening inside these classrooms and how practitioners view their actions becomes tremendously important in terms of democratic education and citizenship in Ireland. The variety of contexts in which participants in this study view their practice – in terms of pedagogy, professional practice, and those that reach beyond the classroom such as ethos and the 'hidden curriculum' – enable values central to the Educate Together movement to be enacted. These contexts augment the assertion that spaces of democratic aspiration and encounter are being created and enabled within a P4C/Educate Together paradigm that need to be recognized as such.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the source of and the result of P4C practice in an Educate Together context. It is asserted that the interrelationship between P4C and Educate Together pivots upon conceptions of child-centeredness and dialogue. Teachers and practitioners working in such a context can open an experimental space that challenges and exposes broad questions about education and democracy in Ireland. These questions relate particularly to the role of the teacher and the Educate Together movement, both as an educational body and as a movement in itself, in terms of how a commitment to democratic ideals translates into practice. The teachers in this research were seen to share certain outlooks related to how understandings of child-centeredness are interpreted and acted upon, such as not being a didactic type of teacher, ideas of child-centeredness that are more than merely 'tokenistic' and initiating a unique space

in their classrooms for non-authoritarianism, adult fallibility, open teaching and deep questioning. Such a space can provide opportunities for democratic living, as enabled through the structural creativity and organisational arrangements that coincide with democratic aspirations and a view of education as a social project. What this means in terms of the possibility of democratic education in Ireland is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis shows an unfolding of perspectives that began with my dissatisfaction with the experience of studying philosophy at university. This experience led me on a path of discovery as I realised a practice-based connection between education and philosophical thinking, which in turn led me to explore conceptions of democratic education, P4C practice and the possibility of philosophy in Irish schools as I sought to answer the question:

What insights into education and democracy can be gained from a lived enquiry into teachers' perspectives on P4C practice in a group of Irish Educate Together primary schools?

My argument developed by showing how the Educate Together movement emerged from an Irish educational system disinclined towards democracy (in either thought or in practice) and presided over by a singular denominational body, whilst the Educate Together movement is built upon principles characterised as equality-based, child-centred and democratic. By approaching this research as a lived enquiry I explored this research question by looking at what is new or unique that is enabled through the partnership of P4C and Educate Together. A patchwork of dialogic and child-centered outlooks on education and democracy were uncovered, which this thesis has attempted to weave together. In so doing, new insights into the possibilities of practitioner-led democratic education in Ireland as seen through a P4C/Educate Together context is revealed. This chapter will summarise the findings from this research

with respect to the research question before discussing the limitations and implications of the study.

Research Findings

This study found that through the ‘partnership’ of P4C and Educate Together, teachers within these contexts have been able to open certain experimental democratic spaces within their classrooms. The contexts surrounding such spaces were found to contain different features relating to teachers’ individual schools, classrooms and P4C practice. Such spaces enable the facilitation of democratic living, whereby democracy is seen as both the means and goal of teaching, and where students learn *in* and *through* a democratic process. From living and practicing within these spaces, enacting democracy in the everyday, participants revealed a new and emergent sense of what I interpret as democracy as ‘becoming’ – an unfixed, on-going and transformative understanding of democracy as a way of life in which the citizenry ‘become’ democratic. Democracy as ‘becoming’ reflects Fielding and Moss’ (2012) idea that democracy has “a more pervasive presence: as a way of thinking, being and acting, of relating and living together, as a quality of personal life and relationships”, rooted in John Dewey’s idea of democracy as a “mode of associated living embedded in the culture and social relationships of everyday life” (Fielding and Moss, 2012: p.9).

I have interpreted the experimental space created through the P4C/ET paradigm in terms of democracy as ‘becoming’, where teachers are free to pursue democratic practices according to their own conception of democracy, reflecting a general understanding of ‘living’ democracy in their classrooms. However, the different and varied contexts of teachers’ P4C practice that are active in these spaces are bound by concepts of ‘child’. The relationship between the centrality of ‘child’ within P4C and the ‘unprescribed’, ‘from the

ground up', diversely interpreted notion of child-centeredness within the Educate Together movement lies at the heart of activity within this space of democracy as 'becoming'. The relationship of 'child' between P4C and Educate Together acts as the central and binding thread of activity within the space of democracy as becoming. The depiction of child within this central thread is one that aligns with Dunne's (2006) notion of a child-friendly society, where the relationship between childhood and citizenship is not only acknowledged, but is essential within the context of our interdependency with others. Therefore, the idea of the philosophical child offering fresh perspectives in P4C and the democratic child-centred approach of Educate Together viewed in terms of Dunne's idea of child as citizen suggests that a child-friendly society is arguably a more democratic society:

... [there is a] deep connection between childhood and our still open and best possibilities... for real children these possibilities can all too easily and quickly be closed down. When education manages to keep them open, it accomplishes a huge good, not only for children but for our whole society (Dunne, 2006: p.16).

Emergent from this research is how democracy as 'becoming', and the binding thread of child as citizen that exists and acts within this space, reveals how the entanglement of P4C and Educate Together occupies several interrelated territories that point towards a more nuanced sense of education and democracy in action. These include, but are not limited to, areas such as teachers' sensitivity to power relations; dialogical and participatory understandings of democracy; the multiplicity of voices afforded through classroom philosophical exploration; and the variation of P4C in the Irish context, sometimes referred to as 'Thinking Time'. What this means is that teachers within the P4C/Educate Together context emerge as practitioners whereby P4C is a means to enact Educate Together values in an everyday sense.

Educational practitioners such as these enacting their values through adult-child dialogue and listening to children express the ideal of democracy as a way of life, echoing Dewey's ideas of the school as fundamental to the life of the community and of citizens. This research reveals how new and emergent understandings of democracy are enabled through spaces of democratic experimentation that facilitate the creation of broad opportunities for democratic engagement within the site of the individual school and where 'child' is central, at the heart of all activity.

Research Limitations and Implications

Limitations

This research contains certain limitations with regard to the use of semi-structured interviewing and the small sample size of 6 Irish Educate Together teachers, most of whom taught in primary school classrooms. Although the findings are rich and a deep level of insight was achieved, they are specific to a certain context and therefore convey limited potential for generalisation. However, this study represents a valuable contribution to research into P4C and Educate Together, both previously neglected areas of research in themselves, particularly in regards to research into P4C in Ireland and Irish Educate Together schools, thus allowing the contextual specificity and detail of the findings to be compared with other related contexts.

Implications

The research findings described above point towards certain questions and implications arising from this study. By focusing on the exploration and articulation of the democratic space enabled through the 'partnership' of P4C and Educate Together, this research has shown that there is a sense amongst the participants that democracy permeates their educational outlooks and everyday

practices where children as citizens are central. The participants in this research teach in an environment that is without a prescribed or clearly defined description of how democracy is to be understood, something that has been and remains a core principle of the Educate Together movement. This was something I sensed through my lived enquiry and evident in participants' interviews where there was an inclination, expressed through different and various perspectives of P4C practice, towards collaborative discussion. This inclination tended to be actively developed and supported by P4C in pedagogical terms through child-centered listening and dialogue within their classrooms.

This research highlights the need for teachers who are standing at the vanguard of democratic education to be able to think and talk together about the aspects of education and democracy they can align with themselves and share with one other through their practice. Opportunities for talking and sharing like this are created through initiatives like Teach Meet and similar events, something that may well be underway already. These opportunities should attempt to discover how to enable teachers to teach in a lived democratic way, how they can 'make' democracy – create it, extend it, enrich it – through their daily lives with each other and their classroom practices. How can 'making' democracy and 'becoming' democratic be extended and expanded? How can more opportunities be created for it? This research shows how democratic education and child-centeredness are interwoven through participants' P4C practice in their respective Educate Together schools – further practitioner research should explore why this is important, and how and why there can never be any marginalization of children if we are serious about a democratic society.

This study also contributes to knowledge in two areas – 1.) the teaching of philosophy as an academic subject and 2.) teacher education. My research demonstrates that philosophy graduates seeking to extend their knowledge area

can traverse worlds very different to the university philosophy department they may be used to. It shows how philosophy as an academic subject offers much to prepare a researcher to enter different fields – Dewey features very prominently in this research, not solely from the point of view of philosophy of education, but also as a figure for research design and methodology. This study shows the need for university philosophy courses to embrace the idea of engaging with different fields of practice such as education, community and environment, allowing graduates and undergraduates alike to be able to expand their research and take philosophy into different areas, places and disciplines in ways that enable practical and social engagement and break with compartmentalisation, such as in the case of community philosophy for example. In light of this research, dialogic approaches to philosophical enquiry might have a more prominent role within university philosophy courses that goes beyond a merely superficial exploration of the many various dialogic traditions existent within Western philosophy, so that it might be considered in a much more engaging, lively and meaningful way, similar to that experienced by myself through connecting and dialoging with the school teachers and children in this research. Similarly, this study also points to the dynamism of philosophical enquiry, not purely in terms of a ‘treatise’, but rather from the perspective of Deweyan enquiry, as an evolving project entailing crucial social, experiential and lived aspects, something that a university philosophy curriculum might also take into consideration when under review.

My research also indicates the desire for change and/or diversity in Irish national school curricula, particularly from the perspective of teachers. It shows that teaching and philosophical approaches to teaching within a P4C/Educate Together context is viewed as a *practice*, that is, a continuous progressive process with an ethical core, and highlighting P4C’s central location of ‘child’ as enabling a transformative philosophy of childhood and education (Haynes,

2014). The teachers in this study, in attempting to enact democratic values inside their classrooms and their schools within a child-centred context, add emphasis to the significance of non-prescriptive notions of democracy and child-centredness, pointing towards the inclusion of P4C pedagogies on teacher education curricula as fundamental for broader discourses concerning democratic outlooks towards education in Ireland. This study adds to these discourses, highlighting the need for discussion within this context to be further extended to include accounts of teachers' perspectives on how they view their P4C practice aligning with their wider educational outlooks and goals in terms of education for a democratic society, something that teacher education courses might include in their philosophy of education syllabi. In this way, my research adds substance to UNESCO's (2007) 'Philosophy: A School of Freedom' study in its assertion that the growing enthusiasm for teaching philosophy to children is reflect of global concerns of how children are educated for 21st century life.

This research also asserts that the Educate Together movement resists a prescribed, tokenistic or 'templative' understanding of democracy, favouring instead an aspirational or 'contemplative' notion. This enables teachers drawn to P4C to freely pursue democratic practices according to their own conception of democracy, and in doing so, provides fertile ground where democracy as 'becoming' might flourish. A *contemplative* rather than 'templative' understanding of democracy as conveyed within this research signifies a resistance to an exhaustive 'top-down' or managerial type of instruction regarding the nature and interpretation of democracy on behalf of both the Educate Together leadership structure and the movement as a whole. Such aspirational and contemplative understandings of democracy are arguably an important factor in the idea of democracy as 'becoming', providing the possibility of further research that stretches beyond this current study.

In terms of this ‘templative’ absence, my research partly answers two important questions related to reflective practitioner research: 1.) How might teachers benefit from the absence of a ‘top-down’ leadership-owned instructional conception of the nature of (and education for) democracy as intimated through this research data? 2.) Is such a conception a vital component of both this movement and social movements in general, whereby principles and values are broadly agreed by followers but enacted and developed contextually through practitioner-led action? The findings of this research provide answers to important aspects of these questions in the affirmative, such as a teacher’s sense of freedom enabling one to become a reflective practitioner, and the relaxed nature of values within ‘ground up’ social movements. However, it would be a mistake not to investigate these questions further. There is much to explore and enquire within them because, as mentioned, they are only partly answered by this research through the context of P4C in Irish Educate Together schools. Given the contexts of this study and the central thread of child and childhood within an interpretation of democracy as becoming revealed through a P4C/ET paradigm, questions such as those mentioned above prompt further contextualized research, especially in terms of how implicit notions of ‘child’ are within reflective practice.

Further implications of this study relate to the Educate Together organisation. As the movement becomes more accepted as a major player on the scene of Irish educational provision, this research should serve as a reminder that as a social movement (arising through ‘bottom up’ as opposed to ‘top down’ based support), it should proceed with care when facing the dynamics of centralist models of education and the pressures and expectations of rubrics of educational measurement. As this study shows, the Educate Together movement reminds us that education is itself a social project, where something is brought into the public sphere that at one point in time had only ever existed in the

domain of the private, something that can easily be forgotten in the current climate of educational leadership, policy and decision-making. As a social movement, Educate Together might make sure that it continues to retain the same spirit of lived enquiry that helped formulated this research – a spirit of being in a community of enquiry with one another, cultivating dialogue and enquiring about how each of us, in each of our places and schools etc., might *enact* and *extend* the principles of democratic living and democracy as a living project.

Attention is also drawn to the broader relationship between education and democracy in Ireland by this thesis, especially in terms of denominationalism, instrumentalism, and systems of educational provision, as well as how a commitment to an aspirational view of democracy translates into the everyday enactments and practices of the school. A school whose leadership, be it the principal, the board of management or, as is the case of many schools in Ireland, the patron, that holds democracy as a way of living but does so *aspirationally*, without decreeing such ideas through a ‘top-down’ approach, means operationally the nature and character of that school’s dialogic engagement is tremendously important for understanding education in a democratic community. Embedding myself as a researcher and conducting my research as a lived enquiry enabled the character of such dialogic engagement to emerge from the lived school, showing how a lived enquiry approach can uncover foundational insight into a school’s institutional structures, practices and daily encounters.

The idea of democracy reaching far beyond being merely a political model towards being a relational ethic that can and should encompass all aspects of everyday life is emphasized by this research. It calls attention to the fact that when democracy is adopted as a fundamental value and practiced throughout the life of the school – when adults and children live and learn

through democracy in the everyday – the school becomes a site for democratic practice and for the construction of democratic subjectivity by participating in that practice. Individual schools as democratic sites in Ireland and their practices, both operational and educational, would be worthy of further investigation, especially given increased calls in recent years for separation between church and state in Ireland's system of educational provision.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix 01: RDC1 Form

PROJECT APPROVAL FORM (MPHIL, MPHIL/PHD, RESM) RDC.1

Applications must be typed. Minimum type size 10 pt.

The process for project approval should be completed between 3 to 6 months for full-time students or 6 to 12 months for part-time students. The approval would need to include:

- An agreed project plan (including a time line or a Gantt chart) (attached)
- A review by an expert commentator (to confirm the appropriateness of the project and to offer independent constructive comments)

Application for Approval for the Degree of: MPhil MPhil/PhD ResM

Name of Applicant: Gillen Motherway **Enrolment N.:** 10512093

Faculty: Health, Education and Society **School:** Education

Particulars of Funding for the Research Programme: Hibernia College Scholarship

Name and Details of Relationship with Collaborating Establishment (if applicable):

Hibernia College Node

The Programme of Research - Title of Project (up to 12 words): Exploring Philosophy for Children practice from a Deweyan Enquiry Perspective

Description of Project (to be completed by the candidate. The space provided should not be exceeded):

Philosophy for Children (P4C), as originally espoused by Matthew Lipman, has broad support (Daniel & Auriac, 2011) in different forms such as that in Australia where it has been institutionalised into primary school curricula, non-institutionalised but receiving encouragement from educational authorities as is the case in France, or where interest in it has led to official experiments in Norway (UNESCO, 2008). According to UNESCO, a “powerful trend towards teaching philosophy to children is currently developing within the world philosophical community” (1998: 21).

Lipman's P4C programme elaborated on John Dewey's idea of schools as a model for participatory democracy, where Lipman's classroom community of enquiry provided “a close analogy to the democratic school, a microcosm of the wider society” (Cam, 2014: 1205). The democratic school in this case refers to Dewey's vision of democratic education that orientates students for shared social ends (Shutz, 2001).

Lipman states that for Dewey, the route to achieving this was to propose that “the educational process in the classroom should take as its model the process of scientific inquiry” (Lipman, 2003: 20). However, according to Chesters (2012: 44), “literature on P4C is vague as to what converting the classroom into a community of inquiry exactly means” (Ibid: 44), where “Peter Seixas (1993) makes a distinction between a classroom Community of Inquiry and an intellectual or professional, discipline-based community of inquiry” (Ibid: 44), and “Maughn Gregory (2002), on the other hand, maintains that a Community of Inquiry in the classroom should not be removed from the professional, discipline based community of inquiry” (Ibid: 44). Tibaldeo sees Lipman as having understood enquiry in a much wider sense than Dewey by referring to philosophy as a philosophical practice (2011), yet for Frega, Dewey's work permeates with the idea that rationality and practice are strictly related domains (2010: 2010). We are left facing a contested ground regarding P4C practices that practitioners must navigate by themselves.

If, "on a fundamental motivational level the logic of CPI [Community of Philosophical Inquiry] is Deweyan and Pragmatic, for it is based on problematization in the interest of the improvement of a lived situation" (Kennedy 2012: 41) but yet "it was not recognised by Dewey that philosophy would have its place in the classroom despite his interest in philosophy as a discipline" (Chesters 2012: 51), it is fair to say that there are differences of opinion regarding the influence of Dewey's enquiry in Lipman's P4C programme and the logic of Dewey's enquiry process having educational preeminence (Lipman, 2003). Such differences of opinion raise questions regarding Kennedy's assertion that Lipman's Community of Philosophical Inquiry is "not just a pedagogical device but the projection of an ideal speech community dedicated to a normative form of democratic practice" (2012: 37).

When we consider that calls for schools to take seriously their role in preparing students for democratic citizenship seem to be getting louder and better heeded (Wood et al. 2011: 236), what can we say about the value of Dewey's enquiry to education for democracy if "democratic practice is not something to which philosophical inquiry is added" (Kennedy 2012: 40) and yet Dewey's "character of participation involved in democratic associations... [is] rooted in an expansive conception of the community of inquiry"? (Westbrook (1991: 138) in Englund 2000: 312).

In light of this contestation, P4C practitioners must embrace challenges such as conciliating their roles as "teachers" when facilitating P4C dialogue. Some may feel inadequately prepared with regard to their background knowledge of the subject of philosophy (Farahani, 2014). Along with this, historical prejudices against "spontaneity, corporeality, and naïveté" on behalf of adults can result in practitioners and teachers beginning their journey into P4C adopting adultist conceptions of childhood (Gregory & Granger, 2012: 2) and academic notions of philosophy (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011), which all add to the contested ground of P4C practices. In addition to these challenges there are issues regarding conceptions of childhood, adult-child discourse and relations, and citizenship. According to Dunne, in opening up genuine dialogue between adults and children, one in which they can challenge and be challenged, we can see the irreducible reality of human interdependence, and where citizenship brings such interdependencies more into the open through the medium of speech (2006). Further emphasis of the depth of this contested ground is conveyed when he states "We should not doubt the force of the challenge to us adults, and our more or less confused and compromised moralities, that will come regularly if we engage in real conversations with quite small children" (Dunne 2006: 13).

The proposed research will take the form of a Deweyan enquiry into the practice of P4C within the context of Educate Together primary schools in Ireland. Although P4C is not explicitly a subject within the core curriculum, Educate Together schools are founded on a transparent and accountable model of patronage, defined in clear legal terms with an expressed commitment to upholding the principles outlined in The Educate Together Charter, 1999, which is subject to review and development by the Education Committee and decisions at the Annual General Meetings of the organisation. To this end, P4C can be seen to be compatible with the Moral and Spiritual strand of the Learn Together core curriculum, which specifically addresses the Educate Together ethos and it is here where the values that an Educate Together school seeks to model in its "characteristic spirit" are articulated. The proposed research will have a "lived" practice of enquiry dimension, opening critical dialogues between myself as a novice P4C practitioner and philosophy graduate and fellow practitioners in order to gain a richer insight into how P4C is understood and practised among

teachers in Educate Together primary schools. This enquiry will investigate theoretical and practical developments of P4C practices in similar Educate Together primary schools and will examine ways in which such practice impacts upon both the development of the role and educational values of teachers of P4C.

The methodology of the study will take the form of a lived critical enquiry in the tradition of Dewey and will be conducted by a.) reviewing the literature of Lipmanian Philosophy for Children and related fields of philosophy of childhood and democratic education, b.) keeping field notes and reflections of my developing understanding and practice of P4C within a community of enquiry of students aged between nine and ten years old in an Educate Together primary school, c.) engaging with fellow P4C practitioners recruited through the Educate Together network as well as at the Féilte (Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence in Ireland) 2015 showcase about their thoughts and feelings regarding P4C through individual interviews, group dialogues, enquiries and observations of practice with fellow practitioners and d.) analysing and evaluating the data and compiling the insights of such an enquiry into a PhD thesis. This will make an original contribution to knowledge by demonstrating how a lived, present and critical enquiry analogous to Dewey's theories of enquiry into the practice of P4C may gain unique insights into teacher's perspectives of philosophical practices as espoused by Lipman's original Philosophy for Children programme.

The research will question: 1.) What key differences in pedagogical approaches to P4C emerge and may be articulated from a personal "lived" Deweyan enquiry into its practice within the context of Irish Educate Together primary schools, 2.) In what way does Lipman's conception of the community of philosophical enquiry substantiate the "primary situation" that functions to trigger Dewey's philosophical enquiry (and without which genuine enquiry is not possible), and 3.) What discernable distinctions can be made between engaging in a community of philosophical enquiry and participating in a democratic practice within the Irish Educate Together context as perceived by a novice P4C practitioner starting their journey into the domain?

Candidate's Signature: Gillen Motherway
Date: 27/03/2015

Research Training – to be completed by the candidate (include details of any training to be attended during the programme, such as specific and generic skills training sessions, professional courses, language training, conferences attended...):

Training:

- Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning (MATL), Research Methods module, Hibernia College Ireland - 29 January 2015, 14 weeks.
- Profession Diploma in Education (Post Primary), Improving Educational Practice and the Role of Research in Teaching module, Hibernia College Ireland - 13 April 2015, 10 weeks.
- General Teaching Associate (GTA) course - 6 July 2015, 1 week.
- SAPERE (Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education) Level 1 Foundation Course – 3 July 2015, 2 days.

Conferences:

- 18th ICPI (International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children) conference, June 2017.

Recommendation by the Expert Commentator:

I support this application and believe that the project and project plan are suitable and that the candidate has the potential to successfully complete the research programme.

Name of Commentator:

Signature:

Date:

Supervisory Team:

Has the supervisory team changed since the beginning of the project? Yes No

If yes, has an RDC.1A requesting the changes been processed and approved? Processed
Approved

Recommendation by the Supervisory Team:

We support this application and believe that the candidate has the potential to successfully complete the research programme.

Name of Director of Studies:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Second Supervisor:

Signature:

Date:

Name of other Supervisor:

Signature:

Date:

Recommendation by the Associate Dean/Dean/Head of School/Local Research Degree Coordinator (please check Faculty/College procedures)

I confirm the Faculty's/College's support for the project approval for this candidate.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 02: RDC2 Form

Exploring Philosophy with Children Practice from a Deweyan Enquiry Perspective

Research Questions

What underlying pedagogical principles and educational values do Irish Educate Together school teachers share through their engagement in philosophy with children, and how do the ways they view such practice link with their wider outlooks on education and democratic society?

Project Aims

1. To analyse key insights emerging from a “lived” Deweyan enquiry utilised as a tool with which to explore and examine my personal journey into practicing philosophy with children as a non-teacher graduate of philosophy, elucidating premises and beliefs and engaging with the social relations established along the way
2. To examine the motivations and rationale for engaging in philosophy with children that emerge from the voices of Educate Together teachers, and how they perceive their practice aligns with both the ethos of their school and the Educate Together movement
3. To explore such teacher understandings of philosophy with children practice and to articulate these descriptions in terms of wider pedagogical outlooks on education for a democratic society within an Educate Together context

Introduction

This research explores the experiences of teachers who engage in philosophy with children in Educate Together schools in Ireland. From the position of a “lived” Deweyan enquiry exploring my practice as a philosophy with children facilitator, seeking information and perspective through the social connections that unfold and develop, this study further investigates the ways in which teachers find expression of the Educate Together movement’s commitment to providing child-centred and democratically-run schools through their interpretation and practice of philosophy with children. The research focuses on the pedagogical and philosophical perspectives of teachers engaging in this practice and considers the notion that the practice of teaching proves a rich ground for exploring the ethical problem of how should self-regard and concern for others are reconciled (Higgins, 2011). At the same time, this study also serves to document the unfolding of a “lived” Deweyan enquiry into such practice and the significance such an approach has on my journey as a novice philosophy with children practitioner in Irish Educate Together schools.

This research offers an original contribution to knowledge by exploring, articulating and analysing teachers' accounts of how they reconcile philosophy with children pedagogies with their own educational outlooks within the context of both their particular Educate Together school and the movement as a whole. By exploring teachers' experiences of such practice and how it may affect their wider pedagogical outlooks, greater insight into the motivations of teachers to improve classroom practices from an ethical and democratic perspective can be achieved. Philosophy with children research to date has mainly focussed on the effects that the practice has on children, such as their academic and social development (Stanley and Bowkett, 2004; SAPERE 2009; Millett and Tapper, 2011; UNESCO 2011, Education Endowment Foundation, 2015 etc.). Research about teacher/practitioner experiences of philosophy with children practice, however, is limited (Chesters, 2012), tending to focus more on challenges faced in implementing philosophy with children programmes into school curricula (O'Riordan, 2013; Lyle and Thomas-Williams, 2012; Boylan, Foley & McTernan, 2011). Although certain critical discussions have taken place previously (Haynes, 2007, 2008; Haynes and Murris, 2012), the need for discussion about practitioner experiences should be extended to include accounts of teachers' perspective of how they view their practice aligning with their wider educational outlooks and goals in terms of education for a democratic society.

Similarly, research about Educate Together has focused primarily on the movement's significance in terms of multidenominational, intercultural and pluralistic education in schools in the Republic of Ireland (Lynch and Baker, 2005; Mulcahy, 2006; Lalor, 2013; Hyland, 2015). This raises certain questions – considering that there is no organisation that oversees philosophy with children in Ireland, how do teachers without any guidance or incentive go about introducing philosophical pedagogies into their classroom? And what, if any, connection exists between these teachers adopting philosophy with children practices and the Educate Together movement in terms of educational outlooks for a democratic society? Such questions are especially pertinent in light of recent events by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) proposal for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics in Irish primary schools (NCCA, 2016a) and the development of a Junior Cycle short course in Philosophy in Irish secondary schools (NCCA, 2016b). These actions follow intensifying calls from various factions for philosophy in Irish schools (Donnelly, 2014; Grant, 2014; Humpreys, 2012; 2013; 2014), pointing to a growing belief amongst teachers and education professionals not just in the educational value of philosophical enquiry in Irish classrooms, but also a determination that responsibility for the development, cultivation and administration of such a value should lie with those professionals themselves, rather than with what traditionally in Ireland has come under the remit of the church. When we consider this point in combination with the increased demand for multi-denominational schools in Ireland resulting in Educate Together becoming the fastest-growing school patron in Irish education (Flynn, 2009), the claim can be made that there is evidence pointing to an unarticulated yet deeply felt desire amongst certain sections of Irish society bubbling under the surface for more choice, equality and depth of learning within the Irish education system. In attempting to articulate such desires and address

questions like those raised above, valuable insight can be obtained regarding how teachers perceive their role in the context of inclusive and democratic educational policies in Ireland.

In Context: Philosophy with children in Ireland

The encouragement of children to think philosophically was first introduced into Irish primary schools by Dr. Joseph Dunne and Dr. Philomena Donnelly from St. Patrick's College of Education Dublin, Ireland in 1989 who followed on the work of Lipman, Matthews, Vygotsky and others who promoted the use of dialogue in the classroom as a means of understanding (Donnelly, 2001: 278). However, since the practice is only partially inspired by Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme rather than modelled explicitly on it (Donnelly, 2001), teachers and teacher educators engaged in the practice in Ireland have used the title of "Thinking Time" or "philosophy with children" rather than "P4C" to refer to their practice (Russell, 2007):

... this practice has been adopted in a number of Irish primary schools, with support from principals and boards of management and actively encouraged by some school inspectors. It has been disseminated through in-service courses and Masters of Education modules and the Association of Teachers of Philosophy with Children has been founded under whose auspices ongoing development and research has been promoted with financial support from the Department of Education and Science; a specialist journal *Arista* has been founded (3-4).

Since the time of Russell's writing, however, the Association of Teachers of Philosophy with Children is no longer active and the academic journal *Arista* is no longer in publication. At present there is no regulatory or other body overseeing or promoting the practice of philosophy within Ireland, unlike, for instance, SAPERE (Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education) in the UK. Even though there exist large international groups such as IACP (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children), ICPIC (International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children) and the SOPHIA network, there is as yet no presence of these groups in Ireland. The lack of a centralised organisation or network that actively promotes the development and practice of philosophy with children in Ireland or helps teachers/practitioners to connect with one another points to the practice existing primarily through individuals; that is, teachers/practitioners working within their schools and engaging in the practice by themselves and on their own initiative.

In Context: The Educate Together movement in Ireland

Educate Together is an Irish educational charity and the national representative organization of patron bodies and Boards of Management of schools that subscribe to the

Educate Together Charter (1999) where the emphasis has been on creating processes around values rather than a set of rules, static formulae or regulations (Rowe, 2006). Schools operated by the member associations of Educate Together are fully recognised by the Irish Department of Education and Skills and work under the same regulations and funding structures as other national schools in Ireland.

Educate Together schools are promoted as encouraging a democratic ethos and a spirit of inclusivity. The movement declares that it is committed to doing this by establishing schools that are 1.) multi-denominational, 2.) co-educational, 3.) child-centred and 4.) democratically-run (Educate Together, 2005). Philosophy with children is not explicitly a subject within the core curriculum in Educate Together schools. However, due to the multi-denominational principle in their ethos outlined in the Educate Together Charter (1999), the Irish Dept. of Education and Skills Primary School Curriculum requirement of 30mins a day to be spent teaching faith formation is instead spent teaching their own “Learn Together Ethical Education Curriculum”, which it describes as “education which helps learners to develop critical awareness and understanding of moral decision-making, and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral issues and standards” (Educate Together, 2012).

In Context: Democratic education and practice in Ireland

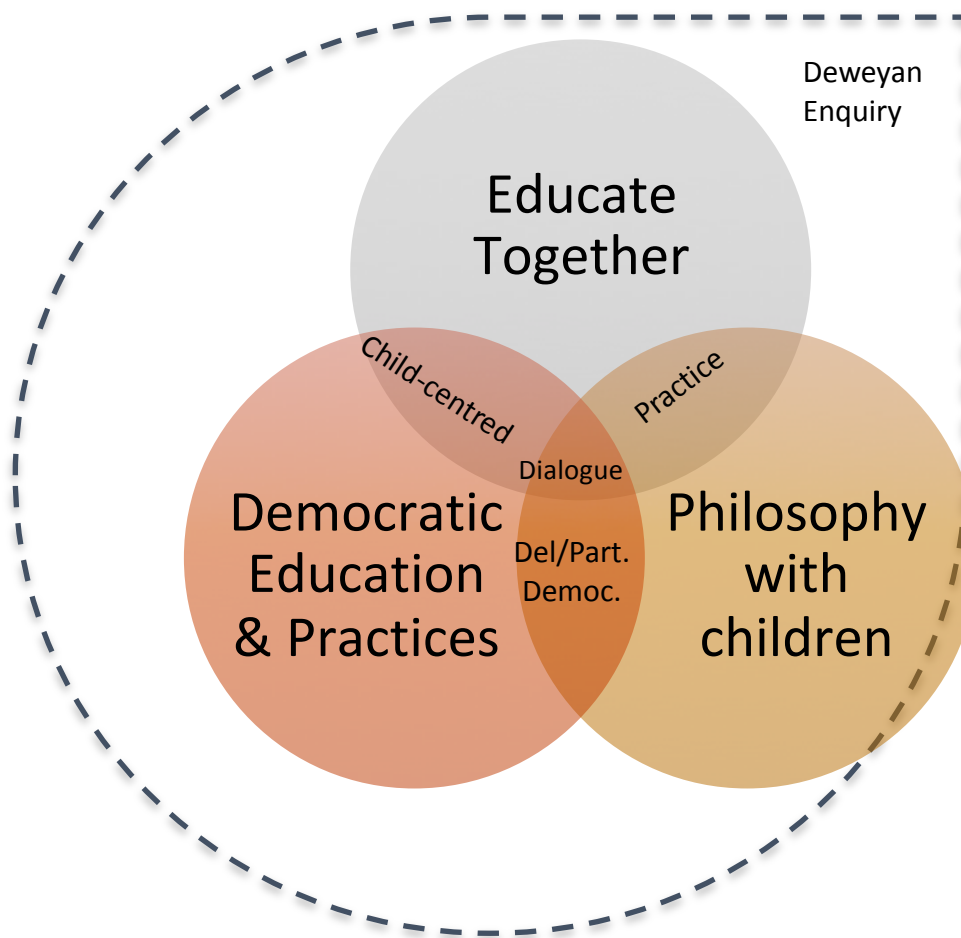
The Institute for Democratic Education of America defines "democratic education" as “learning that equips every human being to participate fully in a healthy democracy” (Graves, 2011). This would correspond with my own understanding due to the broad possibilities opened up by the word “learning”, and also because of the connection between education and community – the acknowledgement of education’s role as social reproduction and its potential to transform (Ryan, 2014). Therefore, my understanding of democratic education not only encompasses how democracy is practiced in schools but also the various factors which determine how a state and society upholds the democratic ideals expressed in those schools. This means that dialogical, enquiry-based pedagogies such as philosophy with children and its associated pedagogy of the community of enquiry, which stresses the indispensable role of community in knowledge production to "maximise the opportunities for participants to communicate with, and behave democratically toward one another" (Splitter and Sharp, 1995: 18), *as well* as issues pertaining to the Irish state's attitudes towards democracy, the implementation of democratic educational practices and its commitment to social reform are encompassed within this study; in other words, “democratic education” here refers to the continuum of democracy both inside *and* outside the classroom.

This study focuses on teachers describing their experiences of philosophy with children practice *inside* their classrooms and how such experiences affect their wider educational outlooks, extending *outside* the classroom, further underlining the continuum of democratic education, and considering in particular whether such teachers view philosophy with children pedagogies as a means of connecting theory with practice; that is, education for a democratic society. The views these teachers hold on their attempts at implementing democratic practices such as philosophy with children in their classrooms and how those practices may relate to their overall view of democracy will illuminate Dewey’s belief that

students learn how to be democratic citizens by participating in institutions and democratically making decisions about issues important to their lives, thus learning “how to think in ways that cultivate the capacity for judgement essential for the exercise of power and responsibility in a democratic society” (Euben, 1994: 14-15 in Hursh and Seneway, 1998: 159).

Framework for the Study

Framework of the Study *Figure 1.0*



Deweyan Enquiry as Theoretical “Mould”

I consider John Dewey’s theory of enquiry as a mould that shapes this research project. My motivation for utilising Deweyan enquiry as a theoretical basis for this study is drawn from the central view within Dewey’s enquiry that problematic experiences – in which we encounter new obstacles to old purposes or evolve new purposes not easily fulfilled – prompt us to enquire (Gregory, 2006: 105). This stems from my personal belief and orientation towards philosophical pragmatism, a key feature of which is the primacy given to

practice (Malachowski, 2013). By adopting Dewey's theory of enquiry as a mould which shapes the research, a personal and "lived" enquiry into philosophy with children practice in Irish Educate Together schools can unfold where I as a researcher, non-teacher and novice philosophy with children practitioner can explore and make sense of my experiences in order to accrue knowledge and create meaning from a problematic situation.

Dewey's conception of enquiry is problem-based, beginning with doubt and ending when doubt has been removed, helping us to both solve and understand problems in the real world, being inseparably tied to our experiences (Hildebrand, 2013). Here, the problematic experience referred to lies in my own dissatisfaction with the subject of philosophy and my desire to find a more practical use for it outside of the traditional academic philosophy world. As a graduate of the subject of philosophy, I had felt an impulse to find another outlet for philosophical reflection besides from university philosophy departments. I believed philosophy could function in a more practical way and the idea that academic philosophy was the standard model of philosophical application made me uneasy. It wasn't until living abroad and teaching overseas in an English language capacity that I stumbled upon the educative potential of philosophy – my eyes were opened to the value of philosophical thinking in the classroom and my search for more practical uses for the subject of philosophy began. I wanted to know how to make processes of philosophical thinking accessible to those without a background in the rigors of philosophical training and to show the value of engaging in such processes for solving problems that exist in the real world, such as those that exist in the lives of the students I taught as opposed to those of the university philosophy department. It was through my search for ways to achieve this that I came across Lipman's P4C programme. Writings on and by Lipman (Brandt, 1988; Lipman 1984; 1998; Nadj, 2004; Cam, 2011; Burgh, 2005) led me towards Dewey (Hildebrand, 2008; Johnston, 2009; Cochran, 2010) and I began to see similar views between my own feelings on philosophical thinking in the classroom and Dewey's ideas on education and democracy – the significance of reflection on learning, and the interaction and continuation of experiences as educative (Cam, 2008). The importance of lived experiences in Dewey's enquiry to me felt to be a crucial element in researching philosophy for children practices amongst Educate Together teachers – the significance of the values and past experiences for developing and adopting philosophical pedagogies, and myself as a novice philosophy for children practitioner as I undergo an exploration of "ever-widening realms of meaning" (Hansen, 2007).

Dewey describes enquiry in terms of various stages of unfolding (Aedo, 2002) – how one goes about addressing and making sense of a problem, doubt or issue in order to settle and resolve it. This is done by seeking to remove doubt concerning the answer to some question by identifying potential answers to the question, ascertaining the evidence available for evaluating the candidacy of such answers as solutions to the problem posed, conducting experiments to acquire more evidence and deciding on the basis of the available evidence which of the potential answers to add to the stock of knowledge (Levi, 2010). Dewey's belief that knowledge is fallible is reflected in my own thinking as influenced and shaped by the philosophical pragmatist tradition (Rorty, 1979; Malachowski, 2013; Hildebrand, 2013;

Segrest, 2009). Seeing our world as continuously evolving in relation to human beings – rather than accounting for our knowing through a subject/object rationale, he saw human knowing in terms of enquirer/object/subject-matter, where the enquirer seeks to find relevant information of the context in relation to the experience (Aedo, 2002).

My research aims to make sense of the layers of experience that peel back through my enquiry, originating with a problematic experience of personal dissatisfaction regarding practical use of traditional academic philosophy, through an exploration of both other teacher understandings of philosophy with children practice and a personal journey into such practice, leading me towards a deeper, more meaningful accrue of knowledge. Experience is central to this as knowledge for Dewey was dependent upon how well experiences contribute to making progress in our lives (Berding, 1997). He viewed enquiry in relation to the life-long process of learning and interacting with our environment – when a challenge arises, our usual mode of interaction is disrupted, recognized as problematic and we proceed to change it and integrate it into a balanced interactive system so that we may go back to our lives (Deters, 2006). During this process we are transformed, getting to know ourselves and our environment better. It is this transformation and meaning-making process that Dewey calls enquiry (Frega, 2010). In this light, we can see the contrast between “enquiry” as understood in today’s educational context – as a problem-based, student-led activity involving group work and hands-on activities – and Dewey’s theory of enquiry, as experiential sense-making (Kirby, 2005). By adopting Dewey’s theory of enquiry in this way, this study attempts to make sense of personal experiences alongside the descriptions and understandings emergent from the voices of teachers engaging in philosophy with children practice.

Deweyan Enquiry as Methodological Approach

Deweyan enquiry, with the emphasis on the significance of experience and how we make sense of those experiences, provides me with a tool with which to explore and examine my personal journey into philosophical pedagogies and practice, seeking information and perspective, elucidating premises and beliefs and engaging with the associated social relations established along the way. By utilizing Deweyan enquiry in this way, several elements emerge as central from a methodological and practical point of view for this research.

Although Dewey is most commonly associated with educational philosophy, priority is given to experience such that it has been suggested that we may understand him “most richly if we read him as a philosopher of life who turned to education as the most expressive practice of the confluence of his ontological, moral and political views” (Minnich, 2006: 148). Life and the experiences involved are neither simply “activity” nor are they purely mental – when we experience something, we act upon it, we do something with it and undergo the consequences that result (Berding, 1997). In short, we *learn* from experiences, making a back and forth connection between what we do and what we undergo as a consequence.

Since this project focuses on teacher/practitioner philosophical perspectives and educational outlooks regarding philosophy with children practice, the articulation of experience is fundamental to this. Therefore, a qualitative approach which builds a complex holistic picture by analysing words and reporting detailed views of informants in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998) is most suited to this study in order to understand the descriptions and qualities of such experiences. A qualitative approach will be useful for grasping and understanding such teacher's views within their environment and is favourable over more quantitative approaches which, through the use of statistics and participant surveys, would not allow for me acquire the depth and richness of the descriptions that I seek. Interpreting people's views in this way requires a qualitative approach like this where experiences, behaviour, interdependencies, relationships and cultural influences can be explored in depth and within a particular context (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

The origins of philosophy with children began in the late 1960s by Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp and colleagues who developed a specially designed curriculum called Philosophy for Children (sometimes shortened to the abbreviation "P4C") that would teach philosophy to children through a community of enquiry approach in the classroom, where children collaborate in their search for meaning and understanding (Lipman, 1998; 2003; Splitter and Sharp, 1995; Cassidy and Christie, 2013). Since then there has been "a powerful trend towards teaching philosophy to children... currently developing within the world philosophical community" (UNESCO, 1998: 21). For Lipman, the fostering of good thinking does not occur by technique, repetition or memorization, but by means of a *praxis* (Daniel and Auriac, 2011). By *praxis* what is meant here is a combination of reflection and action, what Murriss describes as "philosophy practiced" (Murriss, 2000), with children encouraged to think, reason and relate philosophical concepts to personal experiences. In this study where teachers' experiences of philosophy with children are investigated through a personal "lived" enquiry, even though children are not research participants in this study, understanding how teachers view and approach issues such as childhood and children's voice, teaching as a practice and democracy and education will provide invaluable insight for piecing together a fuller and more nuanced image of philosophy with children practitioners in Irish Educate Together schools.

Participant Interviews

For Dewey, enquiry does not exist in a vacuum – it is sculpted and informed through communication with social connections through the active engagement of the enquirer as a participant in his/her environment. Dewey's emphasis on the social aspect of enquiry means that dialogue is a central feature of this study. Here, a normative understanding of dialogue is not used and is viewed differently to, for example, discussion or debate; it is more than mere conversation. In dialogue, there is an underlying commitment to enquiry rather than, in the case of debate, producing a winner or convincing somebody of one's argument (Chesters, 2012). Lipman (2003) asserted the motivation for initiating talking itself as the factor that separates dialogue from mere conversation, arguing that a conversation revolves around generating equilibrium amongst participants while dialogue aims at *disequilibrium*, in the

hope of gaining new understandings of the topic under discussion, and perhaps (but not necessarily) restoring equilibrium again at the end (87).

In designing this research, certain issues have come to light. It was my intention for interviews with teachers to take a “dialogic” format so that the interview structure would seek agreement *and* disagreement, equilibrium *and* disequilibrium aiming at a deeper understanding central to self-reflective enquiry and “giv[ing] voice to dissenting discourses within the specific interview settings that are embedded within and reflect broader diversity within institutional talk and practices” (Tanggaard, 2009: 1499). However, after considering this format after conducting a pilot interview in February 2016, I realised that a dialogic interview structure was not the most suitable means to explore a teacher’s perspective of their philosophy with children practice. The reflexive self-awareness of my background as a non-teacher philosophy graduate influences my dialogic ability in such settings and can impact upon the emergent and organic character of teachers’ dialogic speech relating their philosophy with children practice. The unarticulated nature and the importance of teachers’ own thick descriptions in such interviews and an awareness of my own *situatedness* as a non-teacher graduate of philosophy and philosophy with children practitioner means a semi-structured interview format is more suitable to gain insight into this emergent and organic character. As a result of this realisation interview questions were reduced in number and kept in an open-ended format. Original pilot interview questions are attached in Appendix 2.

In cases where a project addresses intangible and unmeasurable elements, the richer the data to be collected the greater the “need for increased and sensitive interpersonal behaviour, face-to-face data collection methods and qualitative data” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 97). Therefore, interviews with teachers for this project are held either after school hours or when the interviewee has free class time and all interviews are conducted in an unused room in a quiet part of the interviewee’s school. In creating questions for interview I follow Kvale’s (1996) key characteristics of qualitative research interviews which should, amongst other things, adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena, focus on specific ideas and themes, i.e. have direction, but avoid being too tightly structured and regard interviews as an interpersonal encounter, with all that this entails (in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 355). Interview questions constructed for this research reflect the open-ended and discursive nature of the research aims to uncover teacher perceptions, personal experiences and the how’s and why’s for engaging in philosophy with children practice.

Observations of Philosophy with Children Practice

Another research instrument employed for this study is participant observations of philosophy with children practice. Whereas semi-structured interviews will allow me as a researcher to respond and delve further into respondents’ answers and replies in order to uncover teachers’ descriptions of their philosophy with children experiences, observations enable me as a researcher to describe existing situations, providing what as Erlandson et al. (1993) suggest is a “written photograph” of the situation under investigation. By observing other practitioners engaging in their practice, I can compare and reflect on my own practice

and construct meaning as my enquiry unfolds. In observing and establishing a “written photograph” of philosophy with children practices, the ways in which teachers embrace and engage with issues such as childhood and children’s voice and the notion of teaching as a practice can emerge naturally. Such issues are not only central to philosophy with children, but they also overlap with the Educate Together movement who claim “child-centredness” as a key component of their educational ethos and strategy (Educate Together, 2012). Dunne warns against models of childhood which conceive “the child” as too much outside the context of relationships, stressing speech, children’s “voice” and adults’ close rapport with children to facilitate them in being “active protagonists in their own learning” to bring about a conception of citizenship where human interdependencies are acknowledged and brought into the open (2006: 15). Observing how teachers embrace children’s voices and address the “epistemic injustice” (Murriss, 2013: 245) of adults’ non-recognition of children as knowers through their philosophy with children practice, valuable insight into teacher understandings of how they view their practice can be revealed. Here, I take Higgins’ (2011) and Dunne’s (2005a) view on teaching as a practice as constituting an ethical dimension – to move towards an engagement with children’s voices must involve a type of self-regard that teachers deem ethically desirable to foster in their students, entailing a conception of an endeavour like philosophy with children as a type of practice with an ethical undercurrent.

By observing teachers engaging in philosophy with children in the natural and familiar setting of their classrooms I aim to learn about the different activities, nuances and interactions in an open and non-judgemental way to paint a fuller picture of philosophy with children practice and be able to compare it with my own self-reflective journey into the field, providing a fruitful ground from which the interviews may be carried out and participants’ perspectives on their practice explored. This aligns with what Morrison (1993) says about observations, that by “being immersed in a particular context over time not only will the salient features of the situation emerge and present themselves but a more holistic view will be gathered of the interrelationships of factors” (88 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 405).

Self-Reflective Journaling

Dewey connects experience and learning to the idea of reflection – new insight is uncovered when an experience undergoes a “quality leap” into reflection (Berding, 1997). By cultivating reflection, experience and learning transfer into *thinking* – a deliberate effort to discover specific connections between something which we do and the resulting consequences, becoming continuous. The conclusive end of thinking we may call *knowledge*, a tentative outcome used in further enquiries (Harris, 2014). Reflection in my research is pivotal for understanding the deep discussions, frank conversations and dialogic exchanges that I have with teachers, staff, colleagues and others within a developing social sphere about philosophy with children throughout the study and is ultimately aimed towards furthering a mutual understanding of the practice. These dialogues are written about and considered in a self-reflective research diary in order to paint a fuller picture of the social sphere of a Deweyan enquiry, not only because the implementation of democracy in schools involves, amongst other things, dialogue (Camhy, 2005), but also because philosophy with children is essentially dialogic in nature (Ibid). This is echoed by Valitalo et al. (2016) who assert that

philosophy is fundamentally dialogic as well (83). As a discipline, philosophy emerges from the human sense of wonder and which operates on the questioning of both reality and our understanding of that reality. Dialogue is an essential characteristic of this. According to Sutcliffe (2005), although it is feasible to engage in philosophy alone by oneself, it is more natural to do so through dialogue with others as part of a community of enquiry (36), a key feature of the philosophy with children methodology.

This is what is meant by a “lived” enquiry for this research – that the enquiry unfolds with the various events and social connections along with myself as researcher, reflecting on the thoughts and premises that occur through my experience of it and engagement with it. This emphasis on the social connection is important for Dewey's conception of enquiry as experiential sense-making, where “one attempts to elicit another’s help in going beyond his or her own present understanding” (Lindfor, 1999 in Hedges and Cooper, 2014: 3). Acts of enquiry for Lindfor (1999) are information-seeking, attempting to understand some phenomenon and often involve the expression of some theory in the works, being “simultaneously and inevitably acts of connection, of understanding, of personal expression” (Lindfors, 1999, p. 4 in Hedges and Cooper, 2014: 3). Central to this idea of “lived” enquiry is lived experience, which van Manen (1990) suggests is the “breathing of meaning” – in the flow of life, consciousness breathes meaning in and out, to and fro, a constant heaving between inner and outer (36). A dominant feature of lived experience is its expression through self-reflection – a “reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (36).

Reflection for this project takes the form of self-reflective journaling (Borg, 2001; Flick (Ed.), 2013; Samaras, 2002; Thorpe, 2004; Vozzo, 2011) throughout the data collection period of my own philosophy with children practice with a class of twenty-three children attending an Educate Together primary school alongside the thoughts and feelings, dialogues and discussions and other significant events that occur and are reflected upon throughout my research. By documenting and reflecting on their experiences, writers benefit from an enhanced awareness of themselves as people and as professionals, in this case as a philosophy with children practitioner – an awareness that leads to more informed professional decision-making (Holly, 1989a in Borg, 2001). Besides from its methodological value, the self-reflective journal also acts as a form of reflection which the researcher engages in during their study and through which they document personal experience of the research process itself (Borg, 2001). Private reflection can be seen as a necessary first step for the establishment of “an internal discourse as a context for a discourse with others” (Elliott, 1989: 99). In my self-reflective research journal the focus is not on what the students say during the philosophical thinking sessions that I facilitate, but rather on the recording of my own thoughts and feelings about how I conducted each session with them, how my own practice progresses and on self-study developments as I enquire into my personal philosophy with children practice as a step towards opening and sustaining conversations with other practitioners. The idea behind this type of self-study is to utilise reflective writing – recording the events and experiences within my research-related life in order to retrace how I arrived at personal assumptions and reconstruct critical incidents (Samaras, 2002).

Myself as researcher can be considered another research instrument in this study – that is, the particular abilities and skills that enable me to be situated in the lives of the participants invited to take part in the study (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Listening skills are of particular importance here so that interviewees can be assured that they are being heard and that their insights and responses are appreciated and of significance to the researcher and the research project. In “deploying the self” to ensure access to a number of events, people and perspectives” on the phenomenon of philosophy with children, I am moved to participate my *self* in the research environment to build relationships and sustain reciprocity with teachers (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 74). In utilising Deweyan enquiry as a “mould” for my study, I can engage in a lived enquiry, embracing my self-identity as a non-teacher graduate of philosophy and philosophy with children practitioner, interacting and testing assumptions with the different social circles and communities that unfold as I expand my enquiry, creating new social connections and reflecting on my experiences and challenges in my search to understand philosophy with children practices in a deep and personally meaningful way.

Sampling

Samples are not naturally occurring phenomena (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), rather they are bound culturally and socially. A non-probability (purposive) convenience sample was selected to act as respondents for this study and therefore does not seek to generalise about the wider population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), an issue known in quantitative research as “generalizability”. A sample is generalizable when it contains an element that is representative of the wider population, permitting researchers to make inferences about the population as a whole. In response to the question which might then be raised ‘what use is research if it is not generalizable and bears no meaning outside of itself?’, Silverman (2010) suggests that all research samples can be considered generalizable by virtue of the fact that they all exist in the world around us. Since my research explores teacher experiences of philosophy with children practice, the choice of sampling needs to reflect the diversity and variety of teachers who engage in such practice. Participants have been purposefully and conveniently sampled to explore their motivations and descriptions of how they view their practice so that six Irish Educate Together teachers have been selected that represent a cross-section of perspectives – an equal number of men and women teachers, two teachers from an inner city school, four teachers from outside the capital city, one teacher from a rural school, one post-primary school teacher, and a mixture of various levels of philosophy with children experience.

Robustness of Research

Although validity and reliability may be the territory of more quantitative approaches, in qualitative research such certainty is replaced with confidence in the results and, since reality has an existence independent of the claims made for it by researchers, the study results will only be representations of that reality rather than reproductions of it (Hammersley, 1992 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 135). A reflexive awareness of the context of this

research which takes place in Irish Educate Together schools and involves interactions with various members of staff and researching the various policies and beliefs surrounding the Educate Together movement means that there is a greater urgency for me to remain objective, impartial and unprejudiced so as not to become absorbed in or allow my judgments to be effected by an unbalanced or biased view of the research data. Bias such as this is what Landseng et al. (1961) describe as “a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction, that is, to overstate or understate the “true value” of an attribute” (In Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 150). There is always the question of objectivity with qualitative studies, especially when, like in this case, the researcher is so deeply engaged with a “lived” enquiry in such a context. However, with the acknowledgment of the subjective nature of the research undertaken by qualitative approaches comes an awareness of the importance to strive for integrity and truthfulness. The use of audit trails may be one way in which to “address the issue of confirmability of results in terms of process and product” (Golafshani 2003: 601). Also, during data analysis a more assured commitment to the removal of personal influences can also be employed in an attempt to ensure the robustness, reliability and dependability of the study.

Analysis

Due to the qualitative approach taken by this research, the flexibility afforded by thematic analysis for identifying, analysing and reporting the patterns and themes within the data is the most adequate analytical tool for this study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis “differs from other analytic methods that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data” in that other similar methods do not subscribe to the same commitment to theory development as thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 8). In terms of a piece of research's theoretical framework, certain assumptions are made about the nature of the data collected and, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is the job of thematic analysis to make these apparent. Within thematic analysis, the prevalence of instances of a certain theme within each data item and across the entire data set is accounted for but with the ultimate decision of what counts as a theme lying with the researcher, their flexibility and their judgement. Within my research, reflexive dialogue between myself as researcher and the different social spheres that result through the research is on-going, making possible the emergence of rich descriptive themes. This is done by “bottom up” or inductive means where the themes identified have a strong link to the data and provide a rich description of the overall data as opposed to “bottom down” or deductive means where there is more emphasis on detailed analysis of some aspect of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was conducted with an Educate Together primary school teacher and philosophy with children practitioner in February 2016. As mentioned previously, through reflection of this pilot interview the research design was altered towards a semi-structured interview format. A pilot interview has several functions, principally to increase reliability, validity and practicability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). By starting out

with a long list of items which were, through analysis and feedback, reduced down to the most crucial parts and to more manageable proportions (Kgaile and Morrison, 2006 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 342). The pilot interview took place in a quiet room in the participant's school after school hours and was audio recorded with the interviewee's permission. A transcription was made of the audio recording and a qualitative analysis was performed. As a result of this analysis five key concept areas and themes emerged from the participant's pilot interview and which have since helped shape final interview questions and the methodological approach of this study. These themes are:

- Children's voices, affective listening, silences
- Critically reflective practices, philosophical pedagogy
- Role of the teacher, continuous professional development, philosophy with children facilitation, challenges, teacher initiative
- Philosophy with children and Educate Together, democratic education
- Democracy, equality, freedom, citizenship and human rights

With the emergence of these themes and concepts from the pilot interview, the unfolding of my research holds several of these themes and characteristics. A central research concern has been on the educational perspectives and philosophical motivations of Educate Together teachers for conducting philosophy with children practice. From the pilot interview it has been made visible that the open-ended style and probing nature of the interview questions elicited elaborate responses and thus provided a means for measuring the suitability and, upon analysis, provided a basis for altering the research design as an attempt to explore the complexity of teacher descriptions about their philosophy with children practice. Original pilot interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this paper.

Ethics

At the time of writing this paper I have carried out five teacher interviews and five philosophy with children session observations along with numerous accompanied, unaccompanied and co-facilitated sessions. This is in addition to the various self-reflective journal entries about my personal philosophy with children practice and the numerous self-study research diary entries about my experiences engaging in such an enquiry. As a result of my enquiry, my engagement with progressing and expanding social connections regarding philosophy with children practice has led to myself and twelve others to founding Philosophy Ireland, an advocacy group that aims to develop and promote philosophy and philosophical thinking in Irish schools and Irish society as a whole, the dialogues within which make up a valuable source of data requiring research analysis in developing my dissertation. Fundamental to this process is ethical consent. Research ethics approval for this study was granted by Plymouth University in November 2015. Central to the idea of ethical approval is the notion of informed consent, arising from subject's right to freedom and self-determination, and the basis of an "implicit contractual relationship" between the researcher and the researched, serving as a foundation on which subsequent ethical considerations can

be structured. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 53). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) suggest the researcher remains “an open book” about their project and acknowledging that their participation is doing the researcher a great favour by volunteering their time, insight and privacy (69). This helps to develop a feeling of trust between the researcher and the settings’ individuals (ibid: p.69).

Some sources of tension remain within the notion of informed consent where the welfare of the subjects should be kept in mind at all times, namely non-maleficence (where no harm should come to research subjects) and beneficence (where there is some kind of benefit to the research subjects). In this research project, non-maleficence is ensured through the absence of deception in the research design and through discussion with teachers and careful consideration of their schedules and concerns, with interview arrangements being made accordingly. In terms of beneficence, this research project aims at articulating the descriptions of Educate Together teachers who engage in philosophy with children practice. This can benefit such teachers by shedding light on how such practice is experienced and giving greater insight into the practice of similar teachers through comparison to their own, with a view to improving other classroom practices and continuous professional development for teachers.

Research participants in this study are provided with an information sheet detailing explicitly and in appropriate language what participation in this research involves. Integrity of the research is ensured by participants’ right to withdraw up until one month before final submission of the dissertation, and ensuring their protection from harm by safeguarding participant privacy and confidentiality. All research data is made anonymous and will be kept securely for 10 years in line with the University of Plymouth’s current data retention policy. Research participants will be debriefed through the provision of an outline of the research outcomes.

Statement of Progress

Action	Date	Progress
Continue philosophy with children practice as Educate Together school	2014 – 2016	On-going
Submit and gain ethical approval for research	2015	Completed 11 November 2015
Design interview questions, formulate interview and observation schedules	January 2016	Completed January 2016
Conduct interviews and observations with Educate Together	February – June 2016	Near completion, aim to complete by June 2016

teachers		
Write and submit Transfer Report to Plymouth University	March 2016	Near completion, aim to complete by June 2016
Transcribe participant interviews	July 2016 – August 2016	Aim to complete by August 2016
Data analysis, further reading of data analysis techniques and thematic coding	September 2016 – October 2016	Aim to complete by October 2016

Appendix 1

Pilot Interview Questions (February 2016)

- Personal P4C practice
 - How did you first learn about Philosophy for Children (P4C) and how would you describe it?
 - In what ways has learning about P4C influenced and changed your practice?
 - What interests you the most about P4C and how would you describe your approach to conducting P4C sessions?
- P4C pedagogy and role of teacher
 - Do you think there are any drawbacks, real or potential, to P4C practice and how might they relate to other classroom pedagogies?
 - Are there any dispositions or skills you feel are required for teachers to engage in P4C practice?
 - How would you best describe your role as a teacher when conducting P4C sessions?
- Educational and democratic outlooks

- Are there any similarities/differences between the aims and practices of P4C and the aims and practices of Educate Together in your school? If so, how would you describe them?
- To what extent would you agree that P4C is concerned with a.) democratic education and b.) a democratic society?

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Appendix 03: Ethics Protocol

Letter and Consent Form for Research Participants



Dear ...,

I am researching teacher experiences of Philosophy for Children (P4C) practice in Educate Together National Schools (ETNS) in Ireland. This research is being carried out as part of my Postgraduate Doctoral qualification (PhD) with Hibernia College Dublin and Plymouth University. My Director of Studies is Dr. Joanna Haynes at the Institute of Education, Plymouth University.

I would be very grateful if you could participate in this research because it will contribute to our knowledge of teachers' understanding conducting of P4C sessions. Before deciding whether you would like to take part, please read the following information carefully (this information along with sample interview questions are both attached as separate MS Word documents). Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Information for Research Participants

Researcher: Gillen Motherway
Organisation Name and Contact Details: Hibernia College, 9 – 10 Fenian Street, Dublin 2. TEL: (01) 661 0168
Supervisor: Dr. Fintan McCutcheon, Hibernia College, 9 – 10 Fenian Street, Dublin 2. TEL: 01) 690 4635
Title of Study: Exploring Philosophy for Children (P4C) Practice from a Deweyan Enquiry Perspective
Outline of research study: This research will investigate teacher and practitioner experiences of Philosophy for Children (P4C) practice in Irish Educate Together primary schools.
Objectives of the project: The objectives of the project are to understand how Educate Together National School (EDNS) teachers' experience and practice Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions in their schools. This information will increase our knowledge of best practice in relation to teaching and facilitating P4C through critical dialogues with fellow teachers and co-practitioners. It will also increase our understanding of the experience of engaging in such a practice along with the challenges, opportunities, concerns, issues and voices that emerge from these dialogues with a view to improving teacher classroom practice and professional development.
What would taking part involve? Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. However, you are free to withdraw from the study for whatever reason up until the point of data analysis, which will commence in September 2016. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing nor will withdrawal have any adverse effect for you.
If you do agree to participate, your involvement means taking part in P4C session observations where, as a

researcher, I will observe a P4C session conducted by you at your particular Educate Together National School. This will be a once-off observation followed by a post-observation one-on-one interview of 20 minutes duration. Sample interview questions are attached. Your involvement also means taking part in a once-off group dialogue with myself and fellow P4C teachers/practitioners at your particular ETNS towards the end of the school year in May 2016. This dialogue will be 30 minutes duration where we will meet and discuss our experiences and understandings of our personal P4C practices. P4C session observations will not impede on your practice in any way, nor will one-on-one interviews and group dialogues interfere with your normal classroom activities. Dialogues and interviews can be an opportunity to gain insight into personal P4C practice and to relate this insight with fellow practitioners', including my own, for the purposes of this research project. Careful consideration will be given to teachers' busy schedules and arrangements will be made accordingly.

Group dialogues and one-on-one interviews will be audio recorded purely for research purposes and I will take field notes during your P4C session observation. Your confidentiality will be assured and your privacy respected in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All data used will be made anonymous. Your words may be quoted in the final research report but your name and any identifying information will be removed. Copies of dialogue and interview transcripts can be made available upon request. Recorded dialogue and interview data will be kept securely for 10 years in line with the University of Plymouth's current data retention policy. I am of course very happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding this.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research will be used to inform my doctoral thesis awarded by Plymouth University. I will also disseminate my research through peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations, white papers and/or a textbook. It may also be used for the purposes of future P4C practitioners' and/or trainee teachers' training. A copy of the final dissertation will be stored in Plymouth University library and Hibernia College library. All participants will be debriefed via a one-page debriefing document summarising my findings on completion of the research.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being funded as part of a Doctorate in Education by Hibernia College and Plymouth University.

How do I consent to take part?

Simply reply to this e-mail stating that you agree to take part in this research project and that you consent to the use of data gathered through dialogues and interviews for the purposes of research.

By consenting to take part in the research project it should be made clear that you are consenting to:

- The study and analysis of the dialogues and discussions between yourself, other P4C practitioners and the researcher (myself).
- The use of these data to develop insightful perspectives from a practitioners point of view on the practice of P4C in an Educate Together primary school context.
- This anonymous data to be used to write a doctoral thesis, academic research papers, white papers and/or articles.

Thank you very much for reading the information in this email and considering taking part in this research project. I hope it has explained everything you need to know, however if there is anything you would like to ask or if you are unclear about anything, please do not hesitate to contact me:

TEL: -----

Email: gmotherway@hiberniacollege.net

Kind Regards,

Gillen Motherway.

Information Sheet for Participants (same as above)

Researcher: Gillen Motherway
Organisation Name and Contact Details: Hibernia College, 9 – 10 Fenian Street, Dublin 2. TEL: (01) 661 0168
Supervisor: Dr. Fintan McCutcheon, Hibernia College, 9 – 10 Fenian Street, Dublin 2. TEL: (01) 690 4635
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What would taking part involve? Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. However, you are free to withdraw from the study for whatever reason up until the point of data analysis, which will commence in September 2016. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing nor will withdrawal have any adverse effect for you. If you do agree to participate, your involvement means taking part in P4C session observations where, as a researcher, I will observe a P4C session conducted by you at your particular Educate Together National School. This will be a once-off observation followed by a post-observation one-on-one interview of 20 minutes duration. Sample interview questions are attached. Your involvement also means taking part in a once-off group dialogue with myself and fellow P4C teachers/practitioners at your particular ETNS towards the end of the school year in May 2016. This dialogue will be 30 minutes duration where we will meet and discuss our experiences and understandings of our personal P4C practices. P4C session observations will not impede on your practice in any way, nor will one-on-one interviews and group dialogues interfere with your normal classroom activities. Dialogues and interviews can be an opportunity to gain insight into personal P4C practice and to relate this insight with fellow practitioners', including my own, for the purposes of this research project. Careful consideration will be given to teachers' busy schedules and arrangements will be made accordingly. Group dialogues and one-on-one interviews will be audio recorded purely for research purposes and I will take field notes during your P4C session observation. Your confidentiality will be assured and your privacy respected in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All data used will be made anonymous. Your words may be quoted in the final research report but your name and any identifying information will be removed. Copies of dialogue and interview transcripts can be made available upon request. Recorded dialogue and interview data will be kept securely for 10 years in line with the University of Plymouth's current data retention policy. I am of course very happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding this.
What is the purpose of this research? The research will be used to inform my doctoral thesis awarded by Plymouth University. I will also disseminate my research through peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations, white papers and/or a textbook. It may also be used for the purposes of future P4C practitioners' and/or trainee teachers' training. A copy of the final dissertation will be stored in Plymouth University library and Hibernia College library. All participants will be debriefed via a one-page debriefing document summarising my findings on completion of the research.
Who is organising and funding the research? This research project is being funded as part of a Doctorate in Education by Hibernia College and Plymouth University.
How do I consent to take part?

Simply reply to this e-mail stating that you agree to take part in this research project and that you consent to the use of data gathered through dialogues and interviews for the purposes of research.

By consenting to take part in the research project it should be made clear that you are consenting to:

- The study and analysis of the dialogues and discussions between yourself, other P4C practitioners and the researcher (myself).
- The use of these data to develop insightful perspectives from a practitioners point of view on the practice of P4C in an Educate Together primary school context.
- This anonymous data to be used to write a doctoral thesis, academic research papers, white papers and/or articles.

Sample Interview Questions

Interviews will be semi-structured and will be conducted in an open-ended manner with the aim of discovering teacher/practitioner experiences of conducting regular Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions with a specific focus on the affect that such a practice may have on both the development of the role and educational values of teachers and practitioners of P4C. The course of the interviews will be guided by participant responses.

- What is your understanding of Philosophy for Children (P4C)? How would you describe it?
- How did you first learn about P4C?
- What specific element of P4C are you most interested in?
- Do you think there are any restrictions, limitations or shortcomings with P4C as a practice?
- Has conducting regular P4C sessions added any benefit to your own normal classroom practice?
- What, if any, challenges or difficulties have you encountered in your practice?
- How did you first start conducting P4C sessions?
- What, if any, support or guideline did you follow in the beginning?
- Has your practice developed since you first began? If so, how?
- Do you think conducting P4C sessions has an affect on teacher-student relations? If so, how does this compare to normal classroom practice?
- How would you best describe your role as a teacher when conducting P4C sessions?
- Are there any dynamics or sources of change or progress you have become aware of in your P4C practice?
- Has P4C facilitation made an impression on how you view your role as a teacher in any way? If so, how?
- Have your experiences of conducting P4C sessions had any wider impact on your practice or your outlook on education?

Appendix 04: Selection of Reflective Journal Entries

Date: 19 May 2015

I was thinking about how much “progress”, if indeed there is such a thing in P4C, the kids have made since I started doing the Thinking Time sessions with them and how some methods and topics were more successful than others. It made me think about the debating topics that I use for preparing the week’s discussion topic. I use debating.org which has a long list of debating topics and information about each topic with the “Fors” and “Against” on each side. Whenever there is some kind of society ill being discussed, the children really get into it and I seem to get the impression that they view inequality in the same way as bullying, that it isn’t fair to do (blank) to someone because they didn’t deserve it and you wouldn’t like it done to yourself. I now almost exclusively use topics involving social problems and themes, however it is not the same as hosting debates that would happen, say, in secondary schools. The idea behind debating in secondary schools is for children to engage in topics and have a say yet with the overall goal of winning the argument (Lipman mentions this in *Thinking in Education*). I remember debating as a teenager in schools myself, oftentimes you or your team would get lumped with a topic that you personally didn’t agree with, yet you still had to construct a convincing argument and defend and counterattack the other team’s arguments. This is not the case with the debating style thinking time sessions I currently engage in with the kids at the moment. They are not so interested in winning “the argument”, if indeed you may call it such. They listen to each other and say how they feel about it, many times struggling to find the proper words to express such feelings and have to negotiate skillfully how get a coherent point across without seeming to be contradictory. They don’t have the inclination to listen intently to another’s point in order to find flaws, construct a counter argument and strategically develop their rebuttal to “get the better of them”.

Date: 6 July 2015

Last weekend I was at the SAPERE Level 1 training course. I felt that the weekend was very worthwhile because it gave me a much needed fresh perspective - especially regarding being part of an enquiry where I was NOT the facilitator. It was very interesting experience that - waiting your turn to speak, thinking about what someone else said, not having much in the way of feelings with the original stimulus, but feeling the urge to say my piece or help clarify what others may have said. I also experienced my own way of enquiring was a little bit more stunted than I ever imagined - when someone said something that made me think, I would “rehearse” in my mind what I would like to say about it, but I found as others said things in response to what the person I wanted to reply to said, I was easily distracted and found it hard to concentrate or order my thoughts as the conversation progressed. I was also struck by the notion that I have certain reason to believe that the kind of “enquiry” I do may not strictly be ‘Lipmanian’ P4C. It seems to be more like Socratic questioning maybe?

Date: 25 January 2016

Joanna’s visit over was very successful and really enjoyable. We “co-facilitated” a session together - I sat there awe-struck. The way she handled the session was amazing, she could tweak the things she said to suit exactly what the children were saying or trying to say, she adjusted the enquiry as it unfolded and always drew out from the children extra clarity on what they were saying without summarising or being conclusive about what they were saying. And she spent the entire 1hr and 15mins that the session went on for kneeling on her knees writing down their thoughts and suggestions and questions. To be able to just roll with the enquiry like that is something very special and I just thought to myself “it will take years to be good at this”.

Date: 01 February 2016

Last Saturday (30th January 2016) I had a meeting with the Philosophy Ireland steering group and/or founding members. The passion and enthusiasm is brilliant and I truly believe that being part of this group and the aims and goals we have set for ourselves is such a rewarding outcome of my PhD studies so far. We are trying to set a structure for ourselves as a special interest group and at the moment are focused on establishing some sort of curriculum for training teachers to facilitate philosophical enquiry in their classrooms. I also conducted a pilot interview with Jemma last Friday. It was fairly relaxed and I wasn't really sure of any approaches I should have in conducting it. I went in "cold" so to speak and I felt like I should have been a little better prepared but I don't know how. I felt that Jemma was a little tense. Her answers were quiet knowledgable about P4C but I'm not so sure if they were as forthcoming about notions of democracy. I'm not really sure about the content of the interview, but I'm hopeful some things will emerge as I transcribe it. On the whole however, I think the interview questions as they stand are too long, and Jemma highlighted that some of them touch upon similar topics as she said she felt she was going over old ground in one or two questions, so I'll have to address that after I analyse the "juicy" parts of her interview.

Date: 13 April 2016

The first class I observed was Declan's. I had no idea that he was taking such a young class (he's a teaching principal) - they were junior and senior infants. I can honestly say I was amazed at how well the children were able to formulate their responses to Declan's stimuli and questions. They were quite restless and there was around 15 of them all sat in a circle on chairs; many were shouting out of turn and didn't seem to grasp the idea of only talking when they had the object (a crayon) in their hand. But even though they may have been restless and easily distracted, I thought their ability to think and express their thoughts was very impressive. I could tell straight away Declan is really into

this kind of practice, this type of approach, of opening up a democratic space - he kept glancing over at me when a child gave a particularly interesting or what he might have perceived as a "deep" reply as if to say "wow!".

As I wandered around talking to the children and asking them to explain their drawing to me, I saw the boy that Declan had to mind during the P4C session kneeling down on a mat drawing his picture. When I went over to him, I saw that he had drawn the entire front and back cover of a Led Zeppelin album, complete with track names and all of them in order. I was just completely blown away, and not just because I'm a Led Zeppelin fan! I knelt down beside him and asked him about his picture. He told me that "these are our feelings" and that "when we die, we go up into the universe like Joey Ramone and Phil Lynott". I didn't quite grasp what he meant by "our" feelings and how we go "up into the universe" when we die, I thought it best to listen more sensitively to what he was saying and not interject. Just open the door to his thoughts and try as best I could to understand without trying to categorize what he was saying, or putting restrictions on his honesty. It was so touching to hear that from a young person, who spoke philosophically to me in his own way. And it dawned on me that events such as this are wonderful opportunities, when a child can speak unrestrictedly about what is meaningful to them. It is a real opportunity to philosophise. Wonderful. And humbling.

Date: 22 April 2016

It struck me the other day about whether or not my interviews are/were "dialogic" in nature and I do not think they are. I think I really wanted them to be but I cannot say that they really are. I am not sure if it is even possible in an interview situation because my idea of dialogue is when two people, as Marelle (Director, Philosophy Ireland) said, "disagree agreeably", building something with another person without necessarily agreeing with everything they say. I

think the more serious chats and the thoughtful "choosing of the next words to say" when talking with someone are closer to what dialogue is for me.

Date: 25 May 2016

It was so exciting listening to John speak because he naturally and without the informed background like myself, just tried to introduce more democracy, more fairness, more ethical thinking into his philosophy sessions, what he calls "Thinking Time". He just has a deep and sincere belief that this is the right thing to do, that the children can benefit from it hugely and what's more, he remembers all the nuances and the critical incidents, what some children said and the profound moments of his sessions. I am really looking forward to analysing this data, it really feels like some organic happening is engaged with.

Date: 29 August 2016

Last Saturday 27th we had the Philosophy Ireland launch in the Irish Georgian Society building in Dublin. It was mostly secondary teachers and educators in attendance, all very keen on the idea of having philosophy in Irish schools. But I'm not sure that they share the same "long term" view of transformative education and values as I would. I listened intently and talked to as many attendees as I could, and it struck me how significant a background in philosophy might be. I feel that I went head first into practicing philosophy with children with several pre-conceived ideas about what it would be like and made many assumptions about my abilities. With a background in philosophy my ideas and thoughts are quite theoretical and it may always be a challenge to put them into practice. It really made me wonder – can philosophers and teachers be friends?!

Date: 17 October 2016

I've struggled with talking and presenting about philosophy with children and I can't help feeling that my talks or presentations go off on little tangents a bit. The fact that there is no real "curriculum" and engaging P4C means letting go of control to a certain degree means that there isn't anything tangible as such with which to "train" teachers or practitioners. Marelle (Director, Philosophy Ireland) meant that the people involved in P4C training we are just a group of folk who were passing on a shared idea, but for some reason it really spoke to me. I think I might be over thinking the delivery of talks and seminars about philosophy with children and perhaps I would be better off focusing on a "message".

Date: 3 November 2016

From a (very) initial analysis of the data that I have done so far, there are several themes which have emerged such as democratic education, citizenship education, teaching as a practice, voice of the child etc. But I need to see how all of these things relate across all of the sets of data. What unites them? What binds them together? What makes them central to the study and what questions do they raise? Where does my lived experience come through with these themes?

Date: 11 November 2016

When I think of the conversations with other teachers and we discuss philosophy in the classroom it is often referred to not as a strict "subject" or a well defined programme, but usually as a personal understanding of an ethical "activity" of sorts. What I get from them is a sense that doing philosophy is a means of engaging in something fair, something just, something equal. Something "equalising", perhaps.

Date: 6 December 2016

Recently I've been thinking about my positionality as philosopher, non-teacher and P4Cer – is this something unique rather than “lacking” (as a non-teacher)? As I am not a teacher and the vast majority of the people I meet through my research in Educate Together and the various Philosophy Ireland events are teachers. I wonder if this is down to a view I held that my "studying" philosophy was a kind of hindrance to my "doing" philosophy. Philosophy has left a deep impression on me - I have spent much of my life thinking about it in some way. And although my thinking about it may have been agitated, unsatisfied in any respects, the means of making meaning, no matter what that meaning entails, has always been through philosophy. I have started to see the roots of all my thinking buried within the soil of the subject of philosophy.

Appendix 05: Pilot Interview Questions

Area of Research Focus	Participant Interview Questions
Personal P4C Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How did you first learn about Philosophy for Children (P4C) and how would you describe it?2. In what ways has learning about P4C influenced and changed your practice?3. What interests you the most about P4C and how would you describe your approach to conducting P4C sessions?
Pedagogy of P4C & teacher role	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Do you think there are any drawbacks, real or potential, to P4C practice and how might they relate to other classroom pedagogies?5. Are there any dispositions or skills you feel are required for teachers to engage in P4C practice?6. How would you best describe your role as a teacher when conducting P4C sessions?
Educational & democratic outlooks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Are there any similarities/differences between the aims and practices of P4C and

	<p>the aims and practices of Educate Together in your school? If so, how would you describe them?</p> <p>8. To what extent would you agree that P4C is concerned with a.) democratic education and b.) a democratic society?</p>
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Appendix 06: Selection of Analyses

Phase 01: Coding

Wave 06: Categories to Concepts

Revisited Categories	Concepts
<p>The exploration of personal pedagogies, meaningful teaching practice & creating a space for student engagement</p> <p>Teachers’/adults’ positions of authority, adults imposing authority, status</p> <p>Teachers’ dispositions, courage, flexibility & adaptability for P4C, idea that P4C is “not for everyone”</p> <p>Different interpretations of philosophy, philosophy as foundational to education</p> <p>Ideas on the aims of education as child-led & equality-based, growth in education, critical of competency-based views, means over ends educational values, what education is/should be</p> <p>P4C as pedagogy, incorporating collaborative dialogue & discussion, opportunity, possibility & listening</p> <p>Children, childhood, valuing children’s voices, children as persons/people, adults’ assumptions about knowledge, play, trusting, reasoning, belief, valuing equally, natural</p>	<p>Teaching as a practice & role of the teacher</p> <p>P4C as pedagogy</p> <p>Children & Childhood</p> <p>Concepts of philosophy</p> <p>Linkage between P4C & Educate Together</p>

ability to philosophise

Educate Together school ethos permeating through teachers into classrooms, valuing opinions & participation

Democracy, participation, listening, sharing, valuing, nurturing, equality of voice, listening & sharing in classroom seeps out into wider community & society, citizenship

Linkages: P4C & Learn Together curriculum, democratic society & philosophy in schools, ET & democracy

Differences between previous non-ET school and current ET

Challenges for teachers, curricular concerns, teachers' background in philosophy

"Schooling" suppresses children's natural enquiry & creates negative effect on society

Difference between equality in principle and equality in action, critical for open dialogue with children

Classrooms should be places of equality beyond "philosophy time"

Phase 03: Resonance

Wave 08: Resonance with How Understandings of Educational Aims of P4C & ET are Being Experienced By Participants within Salient Exchanges

Salient Exchanges	Resonance with P4C & ET
<p>Exchange #01:</p> <p>Declan: ... if you go in with a bit of pasta from your own house, you'll get that [from the children] "Oh, is that from <i>your</i> house?" It's that <i>sharing</i>, and I suppose it's like that, if you bring your own vision or your own objectives to <i>your</i> pedagogy, that is a very generous thing that you are doing, and it's like that piece of pasta, they are <i>thrilled</i> [to engage with it].</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you think practicing P4C like this and philosophy with children, do you think that has changed how you view being a teacher or changed your role as a teacher?</p> <p>Declan: Yeah, it's brought an interest, it's made it interesting for me I have to say. And in opening up this school, <i>this</i> [P4C] was the thing that <i>I</i> was going to do and I'm thrilled that we're doing it. Now we're</p>	<p>Congruence –</p> <p>#01 Previous teaching experience in non-ET schools; #02 P4C "fitting in with" Learn Together curriculum; #03 Teachers' tendency towards collaborative discussion in the classroom & reflective education</p> <p>Divergence –</p> <p>#01 Pedagogy as sharing knowledge, as listening to understand children & class, as a means for allowing discussion; #02 P4C providing opportunities for equality in principle for most teachers, equality in action for two from research school, provided through school ethos and allowing the celebration of difference; #03 P4C relating to democracy either inside the classroom, inside the school (ethos), or across communities & society (citizenship)</p>

chipping away at it and we're growing fast so you're always recruiting the new teachers [to adopt P4C]. But definitely it has made it interesting for me and it's the part that gets me excited, that we're giving that forum, that sort of *voice* to the children. If I think about the schools that I taught in over the years and the schools where I think you'd have struggled, or this would have been like bringing Sellafield [nuclear power plant] into the school, I know that those would have been schools that I would have instantly not wanted to work in. It wouldn't have been because of the philosophy thing, I just know that it's almost like *that's* the bit that wasn't in that school, and that's the bit where you'd be whaling [dragging] it in and they'd be saying "what about this" and "what about that" and "what about the curriculum", that's what you'd be getting and "those are the skills" sort of thing. And I deeply don't ever, or I never want to... like, I said this in my interview [for position of principal], I possibly would have given up teaching had there only been those schools. I couldn't have done it.

Interviewer: Do you think then that there is a fit between P4C and [participant's school]?

Contradiction – #01 P4C
foundational to primary teachers'
classroom practice, it is
complementary to secondary
teacher's classroom practice

Declan: Yeah, there is...

Interviewer: As in the aims or purposes...

Declan: I went into it [Educate Together teaching] thinking that there's a little bit missing in our Ethical curriculum, there's a bit missing, and this isn't just [participant's school], it's any of the ET schools that I've taught in, there's a little bit that's washy [washy-washy, weak or feeble] in there, and that needs another part. And I think that this [P4C] is it – it is within the spirit of the ethos, that this would fit in the ethical curriculum, in the curriculum that determines the ethos, because ethos is *not* a 30min thing every day [runs deeper than a 30min daily requirement]. So that missing piece in the ethical curriculum could bleed through every lesson. Because that *is* the spirit, that *is* ethos. So that is an absolute fit for schools that are open to that. I just feel I wanted this school to plug that hole. And by doing that, beefing up the ethos as opposed to the ethical curriculum.

Exchange #02:

Interviewer: Do you think that doing something like philosophy for children could

have some kind of influence how you view your role as a teacher?

Merriam: I think you kind of have to let go of that control a little bit and allow the children to go off on little tangents and just let them explore that, because maybe we are so focused on the objective of our lesson, that children will know “x, y and z” at the end, we might see that little divergence as not being on our “plan”. So, I suppose it might allow teachers to be able to be that little bit more relaxed and to see that if it [discussion] does diverge a little bit, it is still *fruitful*, something *will* come of it. But I suppose that’s the way that I’d like to change, that I’m not so focused on a specific answer from the children that I would like [to hear] and I would like to know more about the children from their answers.

Interviewer: So, do you mean kind of emphasising the *means* of getting to the answer rather than the answer itself?

Merriam: Yes. And to listen. I don’t think teachers actually listen. I know that some days I just *can’t* listen. I need to get through all of this stuff today and I’m listening for the correct answer so I know that I’ve achieved my objective so I’m not really listening to the

“side” answers. Like, when one of the boys [during the interviewer’s P4C session with participant’s class] said he wanted to be a dragon and then he changed it to something else that was quite “fierce” as well and I thought “oh”. It would give you an insight into some of the children’s personalities I think as well, and a lot of them said the ones [animals] that could be friends were the ones that were the same [type of animal]. They didn’t make the connection between other types of animals, it was just the ones that were the same. So, that was quite interesting and they’re the kind of things I wouldn’t know about my class and I wouldn’t perhaps be aware about how that affects their relationships in the yard or in the classroom, or who they play with, who they don’t play with. Those kind of things. I just think it would allow you to get to know the children better and them to get to know each other *and* themselves through their answers and through listening to each other.

Exchange #03

Merriam: ... I think it could build better relationships between the children and their teacher, and between the children as well, so whether it takes a certain teacher, I don’t

know, but like I said if maybe they were afforded the opportunity to see it in action they might think “well I do that already, this is not a big deal!”. Like if some teachers saw what you did today, they would be like “Oh, that’s *philosophy*? That’s how you do philosophy with children? I’ve already done that before”. You see, what I think about the philosophy is, when you do it the way you did it with the kids like that I would be *listening* to their answers trying to find out about the children, so I’m actually paying way more attention to what they’re saying than when I would be during a normal lesson. I would just take their answer and go “ok, next, next, next”. But for that [interviewer P4C session] I was actually listening because I wanted to find out if there was anything underlying with some of them, some of the ones that skipped [passed on the opportunity to speak], just watching one of the ones that skipped and the next time he spoke because he had a problem [on the first occasion to speak]. So, he was able to think, maybe he couldn’t think very, you know, on his feet [quickly] or without something solid. So, I definitely think that from the start of the year it would encourage teachers and students to listen to each other more, whether all

teachers would want to listen is another story. But I do think it would make for a more harmonious class instead of fighting with them to stay quiet. If they [children] know that their voices will be heard at a time that is appropriate and they can talk to you [the teacher] and to each other, then there's an outlet for them at some stage during the day. Because that's what I find difficult for them, they don't know when they can speak and when not to speak, they just want to blurt everything out and there's one or two who will keep on talking while there are others who will say very little, so they'll kind of "hog" things. Like you saw [during interviewer's P4C session] that there was a few that just wanted to keep on going, they didn't want to stop...

Exchange #04

Merriam: Well, I would like the children to question things. I would be killed by their parents, but I want them to question everything that they're told and for them to say "is that real?", "who, me, you, that?", "why do I believe them?" or "have I seen something to prove it?". And to be able to say "well you know, I don't agree with you", and to feel safe in saying that, that it's ok to say

that. To have an opinion without thinking “well that’s not right, because I have a different opinion”. So, I’d like them to be able to express their opinion safely and to bring that with them while having a respect for the other person’s opinion as well, to not just accept things and say “well, my mammy told me...” or “my teacher told me...” Just because something happens doesn’t mean it *should* be happening. Like, during Stay Safe [Child Abuse Prevention Programme] we were talking about touches and how if you didn’t want anyone to touch your body or to hit you or all those types of things, you didn’t have to let it happen, you have a voice and you speak up for yourself. Like, nobody said anything specific but I said “nobody is allowed to hit you, even an adult. It’s against the law.” And I could see some of their faces [with amazement] and I know some of the adults don’t agree with me telling children as young as that. But I said “no, it’s the law and they deserve to know what their rights are”, whether they decide to speak up about them [their rights] if an adult does hit them, I’m not *telling* them to do that, I’m just *informing* them of the fact. But I want them to know that they have a voice, that they can speak out, that

they can say what they want to say without fear of someone telling them that “you’re wrong”, and to *carry* that with them.

Interviewer: So, you think that questioning, and that openness to questioning is important for a democracy?

Merriam: Yes, but to not follow the crowd. Like, we did a whole school survey, it was under the SPHE strand [Social Personal and Health Education] but a lot of the older children, what came up [emerged] with some of them was that they lacked self-confidence, their self-esteem was low, they didn’t know if they were being manipulated by adults or other children. Like, a lot of the SPHE material is very out of date now and they [Dept. of Education] are bringing out a new programme and stuff, but I was thinking that philosophy might slot in there, where we teach children that they have a voice, that they have value, their opinions have value, they don’t need to change their opinion because their friend doesn’t agree with them anymore. So initially I suppose that’s how I linked it with this school, because we are looking to improve the areas that are low, like self-esteem, self-confidence, bullying issues, all that kind of

stuff. So, I thought it would link in there. I suppose that would then carry forward into society, if they learn good skills in school and to learn that's it's ok to say no, to be different. And I suppose that then is the ethos of Educate Together, you know, difference.

Interviewer: You mean, like, to embrace those differences?

Merriam: We celebrate them, we applaud them. But even though that's our ethos, how much of it actually happens with kids? You know, that they're still very much influenced by outside forces as well, things that we [teachers] have no control over.

Interviewer: Do you mean that it's like one thing to have an ethos, but another to have an ethos in *action* almost?

Merriam: Yeah, exactly. And I know that there's a lot of work going on in this school around that, like we're drawing up a school charter and we're trying to work on a lot of the bullying issues in the school, so there is a lot of work going on around it, so I was hoping that this kind of thing [philosophy with children] could slot in with it as well. You know, just to be able to say to a child "you're

allowed to say that, that's absolutely fine, just because you don't agree with that person doesn't make what you're saying wrong, no matter how much they shout at you". And just allow them to know that that's *true*...

Exchange #05

Interviewer: What aims and practices of philosophy with children do you think might have some similarities with the aims and practices of [participant's school]? Or do you think there are any [similarities] at all?

Joan: I do. I think it's been really interesting for me coming to teach in a *very* different environment, because I spent fourteen years or so teaching in a Deis school [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: an action plan for educational inclusion], a difficult teaching environment. And I know that to have done some of the subject matter and some of the classes [there] that I do here, to have tried to do something like that [P4C] in my previous teaching experience would have been very very difficult. And it's something that I highlighted at the NCCA [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment conference], that this [P4C] is a subject that so many schools

could benefit from, and yet I think it's something that's going to frighten a lot of teachers and a lot of schools because it is opening up the classroom *way* more than a lot of teachers would be comfortable doing. But because here we do have a value of making sure we're listening to the students and getting them to explore their [own] learning rather than us [teachers] being the dictator of the classroom and saying "this is what you're going to learn". It's very much about them being able to look at a topic and being able to piece it together themselves and for us [teachers] to be able to identify "this is where I need to feed into a bit more" to help them [students] scaffold what they're trying to learn. But instead of me saying "this is how we are going to learn this", I can start off by seeing that they have gotten this bit [understood a certain idea] but I just need to shove it up a little bit to start it going to where we want it to go. So I suppose that's been a very nice experience. And in general, I have found the kids here very open, very open to experiences, very tolerant of what you're throwing out there. There doesn't seem to be the same parental influence, that they're hearing certain things at home and bringing

into the classroom, shouting at you. I have taught CSPE classes before and you could start to do a class on racism or different kinds of those issues, and all you're hearing is opinions that you *know* are coming from home and they're not open to any of that being challenged. Now what I have seen here [in participant's school] is that doesn't seem to be the case. Now, I don't know if that is a reflection of, to be honest, the socio-economic background that they're coming from? Or maybe it's a reflection of, bringing it back to whole idea of Educate Together, is it that these children have been to an Educate Together primary school? That we are actually seeing the influence of that coming up now [in secondary school]? I think statistically, we don't have a huge amount that have transferred [come from a non-Educate Together primary school background or transferred from another secondary school], but if there is that element [most of the children come from an Educate Together primary school], is it actually having a positive effect on the rest of the kids? Or is there just more openness and tolerance out there [in general society nowadays]?

Interviewer: So when you say you

would have had difficulties in previous schools [engaging in P4C] and then the sense [of openness] that you get here [participant's school], is it fair to assume a there could be mismatch between the two [previous schools and current Educate Together school]? Is there a difference there and how might you describe it if there is?

Joan: I suppose from the point of view of a teaching atmosphere and a school atmosphere, it's way more open, it's much more co-operative, there's the ability to be able to feel more confident in what you want to do as a teacher, because if the students here are much more open to being challenged, you're more inclined to say "well, I'm going to take that a step higher, you responded well to what I did the last day, so I wonder if I took it up a notch..." Whereas if you're in a school where you try something and it falls flat on its face, you're constantly trying to start off and find some way *in*, so I don't think you ever get to the point where you're building the challenges as much as when compared to where I find myself doing it here. Because I even find in my curricular subjects, your way of approaching the teaching of it is quite different, you know, I don't kind of feel that

they've been sitting in front of me now for forty minutes, I've managed to get you to sit down and be good and now this is what I need to get you to do. There just isn't a lot of those issues. You can explore the topic more and link it more than you would have had time to do in a different school environment.

Exchange #06

Interviewer: So what were the things within it [philosophy with children] that made it appealing to you, I know you mentioned children's interaction there...

John: Well, the collaborative nature of it. Number one, everyone's sitting around and we're there together and we're deciding that we're going to have a chat about something and we do a little warm up or whatever, and once everyone has spoken [as a warm-up] her [Josephine Russell's] view was that they [children] are more likely to speak later [on in the session] and I totally agree with that. But also, like, I could do it [philosophy with children] every day and I'd love to do it every day but I don't. I like doing it in the formal setting [standalone] of "Right guys, we're going to do some Thinking Time". Like, I always call it Thinking Time because that's

what she [Russell] calls it and that's what I call the blog [section on participant's school website] and stuff. But just even the children, the calmness of them setting up their chairs and sitting around, the excitement, the anticipation of "oh, what are we going to talk about next?", to think that a group of humans, never mind children, could get that kind of energy out of just wanting to sit down and discuss something is so amazing and powerful to me. And I think if that's what they could teach other people going forward, like just communities of enquiry, of dialogue, of respect and listening to each other, of disagreeing in a very safe and supportive environment, and just really good interaction, personal interaction.

Interviewer: Is there an element of equality [in P4C] for you?

John: Absolutely. Very much so. I'd always be happy to give my own opinion, like I'd often say during the introduction, I'd remind them of how our minds work or how I would have thought ten or fifteen years ago like when I was starting out [teaching] and it might be completely different now and why do I think differently now, well number one is

because I've talked to people, I've listened to people, I've read stuff, I've watched things, I've experienced things and experienced life in teaching, all these things, like, my opinions would have changed and I was trying to get across to them that that's ok too. The reasons why they changed was because, you know, being inspired by different people, developing my own thinking and looking further into what I think and seeing is there different angles to stuff and what would people who disagree with me think, and all these things that would be based on those kind of Socratic questioning techniques. But that mind-set, that it's ok to have an opinion, to share it and it's ok if your opinion changes over time subtly. And if that's based on just more knowledge that's absolutely fine. So it's a slow process [understanding] that they don't have to agree with someone they like or they are friendly with, and that comes across. It's so easy to give a personal example [of an experience I have lived that they can relate to], there's an integrity to it and an equality to it, I'm telling them my story, they're telling me their story and they realise that their opinions are shaped by their lives, their family circumstances, their life circumstances, maybe even their faith

circumstances and they're happy to share their opinion as it is now. And there's no fuss [sense] that *that* is all that I [a child] can ever think, that *that* is my only opinion. They are very open to listening to others and that's the kind of community and the kind of society, that I want anyway, so I feel it's a step towards that, a more harmonious society.

Exchange #07:

Interviewer: Do you think practicing philosophy with children has influenced how you view your role as a teacher?

John: Oh absolutely, yeah. I would say heavily [influences], yeah. Like I often forget how what I was like and I taught in the beginning [of my teaching career] simply because this is so important and so influential, I'd almost be afraid to look at what my thoughts were before I looked into this type of practice. Like, how did I participate when they [children] asked me something, oral lessons or speaking and listening lessons, like how did they actually feel when we were doing those lessons, like when we were just following a book or a workshop or doing some questions and answers and following some prompts, I kind of shudder about how much opportunity I

would have lost back then before I started this practice. I think, not only in school but also the difference I could have made on the board of management [of current school], or anywhere, anywhere where there is a community, anywhere where there's people discussing topics like that [philosophical pedagogy], I feel that what I've learnt makes me able to, or it allows me to share my opinions, to not be stressed or bothered about opinions that are completely different to mine. I think it's helped me to be a person just as much as a teacher if I'm honest. Even my own children and my wife and in my family relationships, all of those kind of things. It sounds almost too good to be true but that's the experience I've had with it anyway.

Exchange #08:

John: ... like, with the best will in the world, you find maybe that when you follow the textbook or what you've been taught or your lecture notes, or something maybe like that, you're not engaging everyone in the class. This [P4C] is a method of teaching, a method of *learning* more importantly, that *does* engage everyone. And even if the people [in the community of enquiry] don't speak and

they pass [on their opportunity to speak], whatever it is, they are listening, *actively* listening, they might be listening better than they ever have in their life, they might be hearing more than they've ever heard in their life, so I'm even comfortable with that. Because they are learning and they are engaged. So yeah, what you learn in teacher training college, good and all as it is, it might be good at getting thirty percent of the class better to express themselves, but not one hundred percent. But, like I said about it being almost too good to be true, the people who haven't tried it or haven't stuck with it or haven't *believed* in it would say something completely different. But for me personally, it's unbelievable.

Exchange #09:

John: Well, I don't know if it is intended to be, but it is a form for them to express themselves, for them to have the stage, for them to have a turn, for them to be *listened* to, particularly by their peers and their teachers. It's confidence building, it's game-changing if they're the type of child that doesn't or won't engage or is afraid to engage but *is* happy to listen until eventually after three or four five

weeks they want to share some opinion or they want to initiate some discussion by coming up to you quietly and give you a note saying they'd love to talk about this [subject] or they'd love the group to talk about this. They are absolute “bingo” moments because you know they that they have been learning all the way along and you know that they have the tools to participate and you know that their confidence is growing so they will [participate] eventually. So all the boxes with regard to what I believe is important in primary education are being ticked. So I do think it's the perfect vehicle for building their self-esteem, their confidence, all of those things that are self-regulatory, they're making decisions for themselves. There's no indecisiveness, not being able to make a stance, will I won't I, being obsessed with consequences, don't do that or you'll get in trouble, none of that. So they're self-regulating. A lot of that is a by-product of doing Thinking Time or the P4C I think, a very welcome side-affect.

Interviewer: How do you think those [side-affects] relate to more traditional or conventional classroom approaches and practices?

John: Well, if you take something like debating just for instances, where someone might say “oh that's great to introduce to the class, you're having a debate”. But that's the exact opposite in my eyes, where with a debate you're just trying to win an argument, you're trying to win regardless of what your opinion is, if you're on one side you have to fight for that side. I think that brings with it a lot of pressure. A lot of the curriculum [Irish National School Curriculum] brings that pressure too where there's right and there's wrong, there's getting good marks in your test or there's *not* getting good marks in your test, there's your mother getting stressed with you when you're having difficulties doing your homework, this [P4C] seems to side step all of that. And the learning is arguably more life-skill based *while* addressing some issue maybe in history or in English, whatever it may be, wherever you find the stories [discussion topics] coming from, whether it's in English [class], current affairs or whether it's something that's happening right now [in the classroom], something that's coming from a worry or an anxiety from the news, wherever the story may be found, whatever it may be, to talk about it like that I've found is the *most*

effective way.

Exchange #10:

John: Well, I think if I was in a new school or a different setting, I'm thinking even that my wife is a teacher and if I had to go out and work in her school, I'm not sure how welcome or how open the principal or any of my fellow colleagues would be if they saw me doing 15 hours a week of this, like I'm not sure how it would be viewed. I know personally in our own school by talking to board of management and all the way down, some people for sure don't buy into it at all, they just haven't really looked into it. But the *majority* of people in our school, whereas they may not like the complexity of some of the stuff [P4C theory], they would see the benefit of it, and to be honest they would see the benefit even in the children's interaction [with each other] around the school and stuff like that. I think it fits perfectly with the school ethos, the child-centeredness and the equality-basedness, you know, you do espouse all of these things, but this is a way to have them in action *in* the classroom, not just outside parading under everyone getting to hold a meeting in a hall, like that's not equality, that just timetabling.

So this is a very practical way of saying “your voice is as valuable as a voice in society as my voice as the teacher”. And that's something I really push all the time, we're just twenty seven humans [class teacher and students] sitting in a circle, there's nothing other than experience and time on this earth, that's all I have, there's no other difference whatsoever. Like I have as much to learn as you guys [students]. That fits in really nicely and the management structure of our school are very comfortable with that being a teaching pedagogy, explicitly *and* timetabled [Note: Interview participant is a member of the board of management of the school they teach in], they're very happy with that. Like I said I'm not 100% sure if it would be as welcomed or encouraged or understood in other settings that I've been in personally before, I've taught in another school, a couple of other schools and I taught in England, and obviously I've been to college and stuff, and it wasn't until Josephine Russell's talk that I thought “I'm going to just do this, I'm going to go for it”. Funnily enough, my principal at the time was sitting next to me and I'd spoken to him in the weeks previous about it and he'd given me stuff to read and he just fuelled my interest, supported

me full on and was delighted someone in the school was going to take over [philosophical pedagogies] and his hope was that other teachers were going to get involved. And over the years, slowly but surely, others have, you know?

Exchange #11:

Interviewer: What challenges have you faced with engaging in this practice? I mean, have you come across anything that has blocked the road for you in some way?

John: Yeah, but I wouldn't call them road blocks, I'd call them more excuses. And I'm not trying to be mean to anybody, but there's just some people who think we *have to*, because I suppose we do *have to*, stick to the complete curriculum, but when you see it [P4C] in action, when you see the results, you're willing to use discretion time, which is allowed in the curriculum, you're willing to bend some of the objectives in SPHE [Social, Personal and Health Education], in Learn Together [Educate Together ethical education curriculum], history, English, all of these things, science even, ethics. You're willing to be creative with your planning and your explanation, your rationale for why you're

doing this intervention. But if you don't see the benefit of it or you're not that confident doing those sessions, because at the end of the day you are allowing children to say more or less what's in their head, and some teachers don't like that, they think it's a little bit too free, but I can see then how you could say that there's no time to do that in the curriculum, there's too much to do. But from [my] personal experiences, there's lots of time, there's plenty of time.

Interviewer: So to what extent would you agree or perhaps disagree that philosophy with children is concerned with democratic education and a democratic society? I know there's quite a bit to that question...!

John: No, no, I know what you mean. Like, at the end of the day, education, primary education, it's just another [building] block, or more of a foundation really for the child. And I suppose without a concern for democracy and an understanding of what it is and of equality, their foundations would be weak, it would follow. They go to secondary school, they go to college, and they mightn't be willing to join, like, local meetings and stuff, you know, because they might be afraid to

speaking out or to talk, or even the very basic of public speaking, that type of confidence [needed] comes from these practices. So your engagement and your willingness to participate often, like I've seen it with my own family, I have two brothers and one would be really actively engaged in the local community and the other would run a mile if he was asked to talk at anything, and he's highly intelligent and a great person, I suppose it can come down to nerves or shyness. But it means your self-esteem and your self-image is that of a person who can share their opinion in a group and who feels that it's ok to share their opinion and who feels like they might have good ideas going forward about how things could be done or how you could help or assist or how you could be part of the community. For me, I learn every time we do it [P4C sessions] and I see myself improving and, like I said before, I just think it's an unbelievably solid foundation for a child even for just an open mind for learning in other curricular areas, I just think the confidence it gives them helps them across the curriculum number one, the fact that they feel absolutely valuable and, you know, *equal* to me as a teacher and to the other children gives them a sense of "you

know what, I can kind of do *anything*". And sure we're talking about democracy, I mean what do we mean by democracy at the end of the day? What I want it to be, anyways, is that they feel empowered, that they feel like they have something of value to share, whatever it is, even if it's just their opinion, that they feel like it is ok to join committees or organising committees, whatever it may be around the country, that they feel valued enough to think "I'm important as well, I have something to give and I would be happy to work in a group". You know, all of these things is what society needs in my opinion, just coming together as opposed to just listening to one person telling you what to do and everyone else just chipping in. So really just many voices and many opportunities for those voices to be heard and for change, that's real democracy. An equality-based experience for them [children]. I think this is a foundation, there's loads more [learning experiences], but I think they will always remember, either explicitly or implicitly, whatever way it comes back to them when they're older, I think this kind of foundation is really important for them.

Exchange: #12:

John: Yeah, well, it's like when you're conscious that you're looking for people and you're ticking off the talking that they give [oral proficiency], you're marking the columns [on a school inspector's checklist], any of that silliness, children are *also* conscious. They're uptight, they're tense. When it's just a fully valued input from that child, and it takes time, it takes time to stop yourself from talking when it's not your turn as a teacher, it takes time to learn not to "sand over" somebody's opinion because you might think the person sitting beside them might think it's a little bit "oooh" [disagreeable]. But once you've gotten over *yourself* and gotten away from your own prejudices or anxieties or worries, and obviously once it's not defamatory or racist or homophobic or any of those things, obviously you might have to step in then, when it gets going like that and you can get out of your own way and you can just discuss, the same as if you turned on the TV and you wanted to see a quality discussion and then someone [on the screen] keeps interrupting you'd think "ah, this is a load of rubbish, the debate is awkward, it's unfair", whatever, sometimes the very odd time you see people sitting around a table talking fairly, it's amazing, well

that's what we're going for. That's what the kids should feel on a par with and that should be the way it is. They are now experts in that and they can go forward into their next class even if the structure isn't the exact same, their demeanour, their self-confidence, their attitude towards others' opinions is already formed. You *can't* mark that or grade that and why would you want to? If you're trying to measure even self-esteem, you can have a check-list or all these things but that isn't the *point*, everybody's self-esteem can be raised a little bit, you don't have to have a problem to have your self-esteem raised, it's just a good thing. But yeah, I do agree with you, trying to insert into the curriculum or those that design the curriculum want it to be measured and composed of "blocks", that would just take away from the organicness. That's the key to it, once you develop the skills you can talk about anything, it *can* be something like "bullying", it *can* be something like "puberty", the stuff that *is* on the curriculum, stuff that we need to talk about, it could be the Armenian genocide, a terrorist attack or something even more contentious. But it's always child led. And I don't have to come up with topics to talk about because there's so many things

every single day, I note the topics that we might talk about, and it's just amazing because you do become more conscious and they become more conscious, they challenge themselves to think about something and to form an opinion, and if they're not ready to share their opinion, they challenge themselves to listen and to find out a little bit more from those around them so they can then see "am I comfortable now with my opinion? Is it an opinion I'd like to put my name to or is it talking for the sake of talking?". Because at the end of the day when you do put your head above the parapet or you do talk, you are creating an image of yourself, so it is a courageous thing to do as well. So what we want is when you have something to say you say it, but you don't say it in a way where you're [coming across as] a bully, like you know exactly the right answer and everyone else around must be wrong because they're different from you. I'm kind of going off point a little bit, but that's what we're aiming towards, so how can you measure that? Like, there's a speaking and listening strand or unit [in certain parts of the Irish National School curriculum] if you're really that worried about tying it [P4C] in, but there's so many other

things. Like, you can look at a picture or art and have a philosophical discussion. Or even science, there's so many ethical scenarios in science, there's history and dilemmas in the past. Like, we [participant's class] had the most wonderful discussion we ever had when we were talking about the 1916 Rising (Ireland's Easter Rising, 1916) and even *that*, and some children knew very little about it, like in some schools it's [a case of] learning the anthem and the names of the heroes of 1916, in my class they were asking "were they heroes?", "what decides a hero?", "what about the other people?", but the way that they decided to look at it from so many different angles, and we came up with a question then about two brothers, one was just an ordinary guy who wanted to provide for his family, the Lockout [The Dublin 1913 Lockout] was a couple of years before that, so he joined the army [British Army]. The other brother was disgusted and he joined the rebels [Irish Volunteers, participants in Easter 1916 Rising] and it [the discussion] was about who was right and who was wrong. But to think that that's the kind of conversation we had, that came organically out of celebrating 1916, I was so proud of the children for initiating that

kind of angle to historical stories, and also the sense of “well, how can we believe that, is this all true?”, it’s just amazing, stuff you would never have taught them, their minds are open to look at things from lots of different angles with confidence. Not trying to be disrespectful to any history or memories, but they are just more open.

Exchange #13:

John: ... I do think though that you never stop learning, and once you’re comfortable with that [idea], that your opinion is as valuable as anyone else’s, it mightn’t be scientific or technical or any of the things you might think are “desirable”, but if you’re in school and the teacher is only focusing on the people who are good at maths or good at science, you’re going to feel so disillusioned. But if you feel that you are respected just for your opinion, my God, your mind is open to anything. So it’s mind-boggling for me to think that someone wouldn’t feel that this is suitable in primary or that it’s too dangerous or risky or you’re giving them [children] a big head [inflated ego] or any of these things I’ve heard from colleagues, not necessarily colleagues from our school, but other teaching

colleagues, it's frightening. Deep down what you're doing is giving them a sense of "I respect you, I value your opinion as much as I value the guy that got ten out of ten in his Irish spelling". It's as simple as that, that's genuine. And that can only raise your self-esteem and your willingness to participate across the curriculum, you know?

Exchange #14:

John: ... that's what you want, you want people and children, teachers and family to know that you *don't* have to just accept everything. You *can* challenge things. You *can* question things. You can look at things differently than you were taught, differently than by the media or even your own family. Without disrespecting anyone, you're well within your right to look at two sides to every point and to form your opinion based on the best evidence you can find and not on pure notion or blind loyalty, or ignorance. Like, all of these things, I believe anyway, make us better citizens. At the end of the day, I'm a citizen and so is an eleven year old child in my class, an equal citizen. And I'm not just talking about them or me, I'm talking about all of us. Society will be better if there are

citizens who are more active, more participatory, working together, collaborative, more understanding, more patient. I want to say tolerant, but that's not the exact meaning, and when we look at what we're trying to do when we do Thinking Time or philosophy, that's *exactly* what we're aiming at. So to think that they are the skills that our politicians need, that our teachers need, the parents and the community leaders, they're the qualities we all need for a more harmonious kind of society and community. And that's all we're trying to do, to develop them [qualities] from an early age and to show the value of them, and how practicing them together as a group becomes part of who you are and they're already in there so just allowing them to come out, making you feel better, about yourself and your relationship to others.

Exchange #15:

John: I would have people saying "ah, there are serious discipline issues in the class", so then why not give it a try? Not as a one or two week intervention when they [the teacher] might say "ah, it didn't work, they're still laughing at each other's opinions", it's definitely something you have to stick at. But

genuinely, if you brought a load of politicians into a room and said “right lads, what you need to do now is actually talk, to discuss things, you need to value each other’s opinions, you need to come up with a programme for government that we *all* buy into” or something like that, that’s what they need, we all do, not just the kids. So we’re just giving the children as younger citizens *that* avenue and using our time in school to do it. That’s why I think it’s just so important, it’s not just a problem for children, it’s a problem for society.

Exchange #16:

Jemma: ... to go back to the democracy in schools thing, there’s that want for fairness, in the sense that *all* children bring something to the classroom but not all children are always heard. And for me philosophy always gave me the opportunity to allow every child to have a say, to say something and not be overpowered by people who think that their way is the right way or that have more to say. The floor [for speaking and discussion] is open.

Interviewer: Do you think that that desire you referred to for more fairness in

classrooms and schools is connected to the idea of a school being a democratic place? Like, I'm just trying to see how the various pieces, like schools, teachers, practice, how they all fit together in terms of teachers embracing philosophy.

Jemma: Well, everything is as interchangeable as it is inter-linkable, like it [P4C] could start in one place or the other, but they are connected at some point or another. But my opinion is that it would be a great injustice to a child with EAL or some other language deficiency to exclude them from a session or from the process. The fairness is including them and allowing them to have their say in whatever way they do, whether it's not as fluent as the way we [adults] might deem it to be, in their head it's *thought* as opposed to spoken language so it makes perfect sense to them. It's our ignorance at not speaking *their* language. So *that* idea of fairness has to come into it as well.

Interviewer: So there's this idea that it [P4C] is as challenging for the teacher or facilitator as it is for the student?

Jemma: Yes, and it should be. It should be challenging for the teacher.

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Appendix 07: Participant Interview Transcripts

Interview #01

Interviewee: Declan (not real name), Urban school

Date: Friday 8th April 2016

Interviewer	How did you first learn about philosophy for children or how did you first come across it?
Participant	<p>I first came across it in the Multi-Denominational Ethical Education course in St. Pat's [Professional Certificate in Education: Ethical and Multidenominational Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra], That's when I first identified what I was interested in, as philosophy as a pedagogy. I was always interested in it [philosophy] and as a student would have asked philosophical questions in my youth. So it was always there but it was a case of defining it and labelling it and getting clarity around what it was. And then in St. Pat's when Philomena Donnelly gave a presentation, it was a "click" moment, that this is what it is, what I'm interested in is philosophy as a pedagogy.</p>
Interviewer	Do you see a difference then between philosophy as a pedagogy and, say, other forms of pedagogy?
Participant	<p>That's a difficult one to answer. It is. It is a fine tuning of methodologies and it's tweaking it, like a lot of teachers would be doing that, but I find that I just feel it's a little tweak, to push it into philosophy. So what I see it as is something that you would try, but you would be doing it anyhow, but you would start to tweak things slightly, some methodologies and pedagogies that you're using, you'd only have to tweak them slightly to</p>

	<p>push it into the area of philosophy and that type of questions and discussions. So I don't see it as a stand-alone. I see it being introduced as a stand-alone pedagogy. However, I feel that it's very adaptable and as I say with a few little tweaks the teachers can engage in it. Does that make sense?</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, absolutely. But that "tweaking", is that something that a teacher natural has or do they have to develop that themselves or maybe it takes them a couple of years...</p>
Participant	<p>I think it's something that every teacher would be capable of if its clearly explained to them. But I do think, going back to that presentation that I gave where I was describing philosophy as a pedagogy, and the responses I was getting from the room. Like, some of them were, and these were from principals, "oh that's like building bridges" or "you have that in literacy" and stuff like that, and its almost as if teachers would be looking to "peg" onto it a curriculum objective, where "the child should be able to...". You almost have to step away from that. So I do think there would be a bit of explaining to do. And also that kind of trying the lessons and then seeing how malleable it is to just sit at the end of a big book or to just sit on an ethical lesson for just one day of the week. And to just see where it slots in, without looking for it to slot in to an objective. I think you have to sort of knock this whole idea of "well, where will this fit on the curriculum" and "where will this fit in my Cuntas Míosúil" [Irish National Teacher monthly progress record of what he/she has taught and/or their professional judgement of children's learning progress]. It's the spirit of your teaching, your whole vision for teaching.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So what I'm hearing from you is that you are</p>

	<p>putting an awful lot of <i>yourself</i> into your pedagogy. And fair enough, you've got a concrete curriculum that is always there and you have to bring yourself, like the malleability you mentioned...</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, like “the child should be able to discuss the wonders of life”, yes, you could slip it in, or “awe and wonder of the world”. Like, that’s an objective (!) Try and sort that out [achieve those objectives] in a classroom in the city centre! What do you do, stick on a Youtube video or something?! [laughs] But there’s an objective you could stick it onto, if you want one you can find one, but that’s almost losing the point of it. The point of it is this is the spirit, the theme of your talking and discussion is that, teacher doesn’t have the answers and these are all going to end up as questions and your friends have answers, but you’re enabling, <i>really</i> enabling talking and discussion. With no <i>real</i> [prescribed] answers. And to be <i>comfortable</i> with that. Now I do think that, yes, everybody’s capable of it, I think that if they’re introduced to it properly and they just give it a run, but I would be concerned like the day that I gave that presentation that [objections would be raised like] “what about the curriculum?” It’s heart-breaking to hear that in response to a presentation that provides an answer to that [curricular concerns].</p>
Interviewer	<p>From my discussions with other teachers, it’s almost as if there’s a certain amount of almost “reverse engineering” that needs to be done on behalf of the teacher as a “product”, if that’s the right word, of teacher training college. Where a couple of years down the road they are no longer comfortable, it’s not enough to just tick the objectives anymore, and they start turning back towards all that theory having plenty of practical experience and all kinds of classroom management skills and they become interested in the</p>

	theory, and the question “what is the objective to what my job is”. And they say to themselves “I’m making the pedagogy, I have a curriculum [to adhere to], but I’m the one making it meaningful”.
Participant	<p>Yes. I will always remember this teacher, he wasn’t the best teacher I’ve ever met, but I will always remember him saying “You do this. But also give them a bit of you-know-yourself” [laughs]. And he was a musician and he loved stories. And it’s very much like that, if you go in with a bit of pasta from your own house, you’ll get that [from the children] “Oh, is that from <i>your</i> house?” It’s that <i>sharing</i>, and I suppose it’s like that, if you bring your own vision or your own objectives to <i>your</i> pedagogy, that is a very generous thing that you are doing, and it’s like that piece of pasta, they are <i>thrilled</i> [to engage with it].</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think practicing P4C like this and philosophy with children, do you think that has changed how you view being a teacher or changed your role as a teacher?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, it’s brought an interest, it’s made it interesting for me I have to say. And in opening up this school, <i>this</i> was the thing that <i>I</i> was going to do and I’m thrilled that we’re doing it. Now we’re chipping away at it and we’re growing fast so you’re always recruiting the new teachers. But definitely it has made it interesting for me and it’s the part that gets me excited, that we’re giving that forum, that sort of <i>voice</i> to the children. If I think about the schools that I taught in over the years and the schools where I think you’d have struggled, or this would have been like bringing Sellafield [nuclear power station] into the school, I know that those would have been schools that I would have instantly not wanted to work in. It wouldn’t have</p>

	<p>been because of the philosophy thing, I just know that it's almost like <i>that's</i> the bit that wasn't in that school, and that's the bit where you'd be whaling [dragging] it in and they'd be saying "what about this" and "what about that" and "what about the curriculum", that's what you'd be getting and "those are the skills" sort of thing. And I deeply don't ever, or I never want to... like, I said this in my interview, I possibly would have given up teaching had there only been those schools. I couldn't have done it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think then that there is a fit between P4C and [name of ET school]?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, there is...</p>
Interviewer	<p>As in maybe the aims or purposes...</p>
Participant	<p>I went into it [Educate Together teaching] thinking that there's a little bit missing in our Ethical curriculum, there's a bit missing, and this isn't just [name of ET school], it's any of the Educate Together schools that I've taught in, there's a little bit that's washy [wishy-washy, weak or feeble] in there, and that needs another part. And I think that this is it – it is within the spirit of the ethos, that this would fit in the ethical curriculum, in the curriculum that determines the ethos, because ethos is <i>not</i> a 30min thing every day [runs deeper than a 30min slot]. So that missing piece in the ethical curriculum could bleed through every lesson. Because that <i>is</i> the spirit, that <i>is</i> ethos. So that is an absolute fit for schools that are open to that. I just feel I wanted this school to plug that hole. And by doing that, beefing up the ethos as opposed to the ethical curriculum.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Very good, I think you're on the money</p>

	<p>[laughs]!! So in terms of democratic education and a democratic society, do you think there's a fit, then, with P4C? Do you think it is possible for them to slot in with each other, has that been your experience or is that even a concern of yours?</p>
Participant	<p>Any kind of thinking like this, like encouraging four or five year olds to be thinking critically up to twelve, I mean that <i>has</i> to be enhancing our democratic society, doesn't it. That you wouldn't take "the word" [as gospel], or that you might think that <i>your</i> word is hugely valuable or <i>your</i> voice is hugely valuable, and I would be disappointed should our students leave [name of ET school] having experienced P4C, that they wouldn't be more aware of democracy or their democratic rights and enter society more aware of democracy, I would be very surprised if they weren't so much more enhanced by that. I think it absolutely feeds into it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>When you mentioned there that there was a bit of a gap there regarding ethical education and the ethical curriculum, I know you were saying that there's a fit there for P4C, but how exactly do you think it slots in? I mean, do you think P4C is an ethical exercise...</p>
Participant	<p>I see it slotting in, so if you look at the ethical curriculum [Educate Together "Learn Together" curriculum] you've got belief systems, you've got environment, you've got moral and spiritual [strands] and you've got democracy, equality and justice. Philosophy feeds into <i>all</i> of those things. Belief systems, moral and spiritual, there's <i>hours</i> of philosophical lessons to be had on each of the core values that we teach. And I was saying that to the other teachers, that there's a core value every month, that there's at least four discussions you could have around</p>

	<p>equality, around love, around sharing, there so many philosophical discussions to be had have around that. So, there's lots of philosophical questions around the environment and ethics, and all the dilemmas that <i>live</i> around environmental issues. It's not all so neatly balanced and wrapped up in lessons for children, and I would hate to think that you could send them out the door quite naïve and thinking that if you recycle and that the world is going to be a better place. You've got to wisen [sic] them up a bit and say "there's a lot of dilemmas around this", and the struggles, and you can be getting into globalisation there and there's citizenship, industry around the world, fair trade and all that sort of ethical issues, so there's philosophical discussions to be had in the whole thing, and the last one is the moral and spiritual [strand]. I'm doing an ethical presentation for the staff actually, and I'm going to start by asking them the question "what is spirituality?", "what does that mean?", so even that as a question, it just feeds into the whole thing on a critical level. And I would hate the whole ethical curriculum to be wrapped up "happy clappy" [sic].</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think there is a case to be made for being prepared to embrace the idea of questioning?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, and being alright with asking them questions and being uncomfortable, and seeing if they are alright if they're a bit uncomfortable and having a safe place to discuss it. I just struggle with wrapping everything up [in a neat package], not to take the shine off everything either, but just wrapping everything up so well. I just think we need to probe things a bit.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Perhaps I'm getting a bit speculative here, but would you be able to say why you think a teacher or even a school, regardless of being part of the Educate</p>

	<p>Together movement, would <i>not</i> be willing [to engage in philosophy with children], like when you mentioned some schools where you said you knew you wouldn't have wanted to work there, places where it [engaging in philosophy with children] would be like pushing a boulder up a hill.</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I suppose it echos the Irish Times article this morning which reflects the response to poll to the ethical curriculum, if you saw it, which was really scary. Well I found it scary. It found that a lot of people weren't very open to the ethical curriculum [new Irish primary school curriculum on Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics] coming in, in whatever shape or form [it takes]...</p>
Interviewer	<p>This is the ERB and Ethics course...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah. I would see it as fair as well because the curriculum is overloaded, so overloaded. I have new parents coming in asking "do you really do science in school?" and I would say "yeah, we do" but we all know there are weeks when we can't do it because we're flat out with literacy and numeracy. So I would see that teachers would rightly be concerned about an overload of the curriculum and if it was perceived as that, then there would be [unwillingness to adopt it]... I don't think it would overload it because I do think it's just a way, like an approach... because it can fit into any lesson, but I would see that sort of reluctance. I'd also see maybe a bit of, which was echoed today in the Irish Times article, "what's this ethical education that's going to erode our ethos and our school and our religion?" And it could be perceived that way. I mean in black and white, in the so called second level religious programme, in black and white it says, and this is the programme which is [supposedly] looking objectively at</p>

	<p>all religions and none around the world, but in black and white it says “challenges to Catholicism is atheism and agnosticism”. So does philosophy fit in there for some people? With the questioning? Would teachers who really wanted to push the whole faith thing, would they be comfortable asking the question “what if there’s no God?” or “what if there’s no designer?”. Would they be comfortable asking those questions? Because you have to ask them. You can still do P4C without asking them but I guarantee you if you have any philosophical discussion with children, I don’t know the statistics but I know the God question comes up a lot, the designer comes into it quite a lot. It even happened today when we discussed feelings [during Declan’s philosophy with children session], “why do we have feelings?”, they [the children] might say “because God gave us feelings”. Are you comfortable having that conversation if someone asks “what if God doesn’t exist”? Are there classrooms, are there teachers that are comfortable going there? I don’t know. But that’s evident in the Irish Times this morning and I know that’s where it’s coming from. That conversation. There’s no better people than teachers and educators who will go there.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But just by asking the question, it doesn’t mean that you are assuming a side. You’re <i>just</i> asking the question.</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, and it’s getting teachers to understand that and not feeling obliged to step in and say “well, sure we all know there is... anyway...” [ignoring question and moving on]. Or whatever it is. It’s getting teachers comfortable with that [idea], that they <i>don’t</i> know when I think a lot of teacher may <i>think</i> they know. I think teachers might struggle with that. I think an answer can be found in that [Irish] Times article this morning, because I think that’s where it’s coming from. I could</p>

	<p>be wrong. But Mary Immaculate [teacher training college, co. Limerick] came in with strong comments about it. So it's still there, sadly. I mean, I'm not trying to push the whole atheism thing. I just like to ask the questions. And I'm comfortable with someone talking about their God, I'm totally comfortable with that. But I'm also comfortable with questioning it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>There seems to be an awful lot of groups dumping things on school doorsteps – government, policy groups, other groups with vested interest in what's being done in the school. And that's fair enough, but it's also dumped on teachers. So what would you say to the idea that there's a certain type of teacher or a certain type of person that goes on to be a teacher that has a certain inclination or disposition to do philosophy?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I would agree with that. I mean it's horses for courses, people have interests, people have questions in mind, people accept things and others don't, so it's <i>within</i> the person. I do think you can nurture it, because I've been nurturing it here in this school, and when I introduced it the excitement from the staff was huge. The day I introduced it I gave a presentation on it and nobody knew I was going to do it, they didn't really know what it was about and when they saw it, they really just took to it. The only thing they do struggle with is class sizes, I mean it is tricky with larger classes and that something we have to address and to manage. And one of the teachers is so into it and I would have thought a year earlier that they wouldn't have been. Not that I thought they wouldn't have been interested in it, I'm just surprised by how into they are. So it's really encouraging.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Forgive the pun, but you're preaching to the choir here!! [laughs] I'm just interested in hearing about your</p>

	<p>motivations and your experiences for engaging in philosophy with children</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>It very much came from me and the unanswered questions I had in my classroom at school and I never stopped asking them. But I still remember every unanswered question I had. And the annoyance and the frustration that I had with not getting answers. I still don't have the answers to those questions, but I didn't like being given a deaf ear. And I didn't like being given crap answers that were "The Answer" [final say on the matter] and I knew they weren't. So it comes from as far back as that for me. So when Philomena [Donnelly] introduced it, that defined it and pinned it down for me, but... like, I only had a conversation there last week with someone who said "look, you know there's no answer to that" and I was like "well, no, there <i>has</i> to be". So yeah, it just very much comes from within my childhood and the questions I asked. And not accepting some of the stuff that was being taught. Just not accepting it. And that might have been a teacher's attitude to something. And just not accepting it, those attitudes just weren't right. Like, having to sit and listen to that...</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Like a kind of unverbaliised uncertainty or disagreement within yourself that spurs you on to kind of say "hold on a minute, this just isn't meaningful"...</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>Yeah, and being told "it's beyond your imagination, Declan" or being told "it's beyond what you'd be able to think of, so would you stop?" Like, I remember those questions, I remember when you get to the end of the universe, what then? I remember asking those questions and asking a Christian Brother, and it was nothing to do with if it was a Christian Brother or a nun or whatever, I remember all the questions that were</p>

	not answered [adequately] for me and just being told “Look, stop. That’s the way it is”.
Interviewer	I would have had kind of the same experience with myself, not being allowed a voice, those really interesting things to talk about and discuss but there being no place for them in the school. And I was shocked when I studied philosophy in college because they were talking about the questions and the things that I had to think about by myself. Because we weren’t allowed to do it in school.
Participant	Yeah, I mean even in my 30s I spent so long, after the Hubble photographs [Space Telescope] I spent so long thinking about that. And I still do. And now they’re [NASA] looking for the tenth planet and the vastness of the bottom of the sea and stuff like that, it just very much comes from all that. And when you talk to [X] he would clearly say “Oh, well you might have to train me a little bit in how to do this because I <i>didn’t</i> have those questions”, but he loves it. So he <i>didn’t</i> struggle as much as I seemed to have. Not “struggle”, I mean I enjoy all those thoughts, I just wished we could have had a conversation around them in school.
Interviewer	But you’ve channelled them into a part of your life now it seems...
Participant	I’m making a wrong a right [righting a wrong] in many ways. Because I do firmly believe you don’t need to be teaching morals and right and wrong through fear of religion or “tallying” [ideological point scoring], and every time we put up the core value of the month and we do it at assembly, I know I’m righting a wrong. And I know I’m tallying now but, just making a slight little change based on ideals.

Interviewer

Yeah. Making things meaningful. Thanks very much, [X].

Interview #02

Interviewee: Aiden (not real name), Urban school

Date: Friday 8th April 2016

Interviewer	How did you first come across philosophy with children?
Participant	<p>We would have done it in Trinity College, Dublin, we spent one day a week there, I studied psychology and that's where we studied the kind of "bigger" subjects than, say, the methodologies that we would have done back in Froebel [Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education]. We had some good lecturers and we would have done a little bit of philosophy in there [Trinity], I'm not sure if it was every year, it might have only been for a semester, but it was good, I really enjoyed it and I kind of "clicked" with it fairly well. Now I kind of would have been a bit cynical about it too, some things can get a little bit too "waffly", you know? But I came back to it then when I came to this school because Declan [school principal] is so into it. Like he did an "ice-breaker" the first day I was here, I can't remember what the ice-breaker was, but I just found myself unable to think outside the box at all. I think you were supposed to make up a "fact" about yourself that was untrue and two more that were true. And I couldn't think outside the box at all...</p>
Interviewer	This was here in the school?
Participant	<p>This was here in our staff room, it was our first staff meeting, and he talked about, like I've seen TED Talks and things like that, where [in] education, we teach the imagination out of kids, and I really feel</p>

	<p>myself that that has happened to me. So that's where I came across philosophy again, where it came back to me was in here, to really try to get the kids to be able to think outside the box or to think critically think or whatever, and not just think that things are black and white. Because like I say, my imagination, I really did struggle to come up with random ideas, like I struggled to be innovative <i>myself</i>, so I would like to foster that idea in kids I suppose. I might have done a little bit of it myself in school, secondary school, Aristotle and things like that, but yeah, that's my relationship with philosophy so far anyway.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I know you mentioned that you are relatively "fresh" to philosophy with children, but do you think practicing something like this affects your role as a teacher, or how you view yourself as a teacher?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I suppose it like that old classical saying, that education isn't the filling of an urn, it's the lighting of a flame or something like that. It's giving them [children] a tool to be able to learn [for] themselves or to come up with different ideas as opposed to just filling them with knowledge. So this philosophy I think gives them a really good skill when it comes to [things like] that. I heard [a story] once where children in a primary school were asked "what is a paperclip for?", and the children in Junior infants came up with 80 uses for a paperclip and by the time they asked the same questions to 6th class students they could only come up with one use – to join pages together. So I think that skill is giving them great help when it comes to actually learning, as opposed to just filling them with knowledge. So I see us as teachers, with philosophy being a really good aid for that, to giving them that kind of skill.</p>

Interviewer	Do you see it as being complementary to your own pedagogy or your own pedagogical approaches?
Participant	Yeah, and mainly for fitting in with the curriculum, specifically Learn Together [ET ethical education curriculum], in that we do ethics and human rights and various other subjects. But not just that, there's also drama and English fits in with them. But as a pedagogy, as a whole, I would see it fitting in with me, but more specifically with those subjects. It doesn't fit in with just <i>everything</i> , you know?
Interviewer	So you see it complementary to the curriculum?
Participant	Yeah, it does, it helps them [children] think critically, but as far as the teacher planning the day and trying to fit in philosophy into different subjects, that's where you could focus on it. Like, in English, drama, SPHE [Social, Personal and Health Education] and Learn Together. Learn Together would be the main slot however. It's a good way [Learn Together curriculum] to fit it [philosophy with children] into the day, the teaching day.
Interviewer	Do you think the aims and the purpose of P4C are similar or dissimilar to the aims of [name of ET school]?
Participant	Yeah, I think so. Definitely it's such a big part of Declan [school principal], he's a thinker and the ethos [here] would reflect him in many ways. Philosophy fits in really well with all of us, like the central thing with the ethos I think, well kind of an unwritten thing I think, would be openness. So with philosophy, one of its pillars would be to be open, open to everything. I think it definitely reflects our ethos.

Interviewer	<p>You mentioned that you felt a bit confined in your experience of the education system [struggled with “innovative” thinking], do you feel that your motivation for doing philosophy with children is as a result of feeling that you may have missed out on something when you were in school?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, it would be a motivation definitely to say “Jeez, I don’t want these kids having the same lack of practice in this imaginative thoughts and conversation”. Also, a huge motivation for me would be... you know, even <i>in</i> those conversations with the children to come up with things <i>myself</i>, you know, it’s a good thing for teachers. Like, we were doing the chicken and the egg dilemma earlier today and me going on about an egg growing on a tree, I wouldn’t naturally come up with stuff like that, so it’s good practice for me to come up with different ideas or whatever. So it would be a selfish thing too because you’re trying to develop yourself too as a teacher and philosophy lessons definitely help with that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So in terms of educating for a democratic society, how do you think P4C features in that, or do you think it features at all?</p>
Participant	<p>Well, I don’t know how it could ever be opposed to it, I mean a pillar of philosophy for children would be a democratic outlook, everyone has a chance to speak and ideas are not sort of “shot down”, so I think it is a huge part of democracy.</p>
Interviewer	<p>If you hadn’t have come across P4C do you think there would some other thing that you would look for to aid your practice, something that would help you in your commitment to good teaching practices?</p>

Participant	In the same area, like another kind of philosophical approach you mean?
Interviewer	Well just yourself as a teacher and everything that involves in your normal classroom duties that you do day to day...
Participant	<p>Yeah, well, I taught for six years in another school and I never come across anything like it, so from the point of view of [teaching] style, I'd have a very open style anyway. I would very much try to say to the kids "there's no such thing as a silly question" or just to say that there are a lot of things that are not just black and white. Like, in my six years of previous teaching I have never tackled any of the issues which I am tackling now. There was just no form for it, no medium for it. Whereas this [philosophy with children] has given me just that [a medium for engagement]. Just the range of subjects that have been set up [resources for teachers to aid P4C compiled by school principal] using storybooks, and the questions and discussions to develop to go along with it, it's been great. And I'm sure he'll [Declan, school principal] keep going with that, it seems like a really really good platform and I haven't really experienced anything like that before.</p>
Interviewer	You mentioned about your previous school that there was no medium for philosophy with children, do you think that could be because there was no "space" provided to do P4C?
Participant	Well, the school I was in was in Sheriff Street [inner city area of Dublin], and to be honest, if I had thought of doing it or if someone had come up with the idea of doing it, I would have done it, and in that school you probably would have gotten some really interesting lessons and conversations. But it was just a thing where

	<p>it was never even thought of, like the principal would have given you a lot of autonomy in there and he wouldn't really care too much what you were doing [in your classroom] in some instances, so he would have let me do it, but I never thought of doing it I suppose. Like I said, I was a little cynical about it at times about philosophy, so it wasn't really the school's "fault" as such, I just never did it.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Can you think of any reason why a school, any school, or any group for that matter, for whatever reason would not be willing to adopt or engage with P4C?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, well you just think of religion straight away, I suppose a lot of the themes, the more interesting themes in philosophy, like... I've dealt with atheism [during P4C sessions] in here, you would run straight into problems in a Catholic school, or any religious school. But also in certain stories, like <i>The Trouble With Cauliflower</i> [by Jane Sutton], it's basically just a story about "piseogs" [superstitious traditions, magic, folk beliefs] and people thinking that there's such thing as bad luck, but it would probably struggle in a Catholic school again, you could get into a bit of bother. So I think religion is the main thing that would pop into my head about schools that would go against P4C. Otherwise I can't imagine any other problem, just religion really.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I said to Declan before that there is a lot of outside interests placed firmly at the feet of schools from different groups such as government policies, policy-makers, other special interest groups with an educational reach...</p>
Participant	<p>Programmes...</p>

<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Exactly, programmes, “initiatives”, all these things end up at the school doorstep and schools are expected to deal with them. In another way it can be said that all those things end up in the lap of the teacher as well. So how do you feel about teachers taking on something like P4C in terms of the kind of people they would be, their disposition for philosophy and their interest in it?</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>Yes, well, the thing with teachers is they all like to get a nice smart looking package. Like this Discover Primary Science [Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme (DPSM), part of Science Foundation Ireland Education and Public Engagement Programme] now would be something that is run fairly successfully and it’s because they give a teacher pack, something like would be really cool and it would help it fly [latch on] a little bit better and it would also help inform the principals where their teachers could fit in this sort of stuff [philosophy with children in the primary curriculum]. It would be generally during religion time I suppose, they would be the two obstacles you’d come to with teachers I think would be a) getting their attention and b) when can they actually do it, what slot they can fit it into. But otherwise I think it would be a breathe of fresh air for teachers. They’re sick of “Alive-O” [primary school religious education programme], and in general philosophy doesn’t conflict with that. Philosophy has a part in churches and it could be fitted in. In theory.</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Yeah, I mean my experience has been that even by just raising the question [of religious belief], some people just assume you’re on one side or another, where someone like myself would feel that just asking the question and being open to questioning isn’t categorising the debate as non-religious versus</p>

	religious...
Participant	<p>Yeah, it's just fear I suppose that holds people back. Like, some of the religious people I know, the church [RC] would have gotten people to view yoga as this kind of New World type of stuff and philosophy would be a great part of that, even though both of them [RC and yoga] are as old as the hills. Its just fear of the unknown. I know yoga isn't philosophy, it's just another <i>thing</i> for the mind. It's a big obstacle.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And do you have a "goal" in mind regarding your practice, like for both your normal classroom practice and your philosophy with children practice</p>
Participant	<p>I guess if we're talking about goals it would be to try and teach it as often as I can, or at least as often as I've planned for the year whether it's once a week or once a fortnight or whatever it is, because you can't have measurable goals for philosophy, can you? It would be to just teach it as much as possible and not leave it until the third term [after Easter]. Like if I'm talking about this class [participant's current class], to do it more regularly, that would be my main goal. Another goal is to do more projects, like we just finished a recording [podcast of children engaging in philosophical discussion] and to publish that on the internet. So while it's not measurable or anything like, you can still have projects to record the successes of it or the interesting answers and discussions that you've had.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So to ask questions and although no answers may be given, to engage in the discussion is a worthwhile endeavour?</p>
Participant	<p>Yes. The fact that it is not measurable is the</p>

	<p>problem, but it's being left behind, even though it's thousands of years old, it's not seen as going to help you get your honours maths in your Leaving Cert. That kind of critical thought and imagination is just being left behind.</p>
Interviewer	<p>That seems to be the way our educational policies and our subjects, our "objectives" and things like that, that seems to be the way that they are going, that certain boxes have to be checked. Whereas maybe P4C doesn't have a box to be checked but obviously yourself and some other teachers I've talked to seem to think it is very worthwhile...</p>
Participant	<p>Like, I've only just being doing it this week with that junior infant class, only because they're just junior infants, but I should have been doing it since the start, but when you came in you could see that I have a basic structure in place and I mean that is a "box" you could tick in ways for teachers. If they could structure it [philosophy with children session] properly, like you won't really be able to measure how "philosophical" the kids are, but you <i>can</i> have the structures there I suppose.</p>
Interviewer	<p>That's right. Because like everything else, it takes practice to build it up, when they get used to the idea of a community and understanding caring collaborative thinking, all that takes time, but still very enabling without the need for box checking or learning "competencies". But that's all I wanted to ask you, to pick your brains for a little bit about how you felt about what you were doing. So thanks so much</p>
Participant	<p>No problem, I mean obviously Declan's massively into it and I'm kind of following his lead, but I do love it, like I really really love it. We were in this room last year with an older class and we had some</p>

	<p>really cool lessons. I remember doing a question on foxhunting and one of the really nice kids in the class said that it was alright, that people should be allowed do it and his rationale was that they kill other animals completely cruelly so why should we worry about foxes just because they're beautiful. It was just really interesting and we did loads of little lessons like that. We did the trolley dilemma as well, and they were really quite able for it, even though that could be quite dark for kids, but it was really good</p>
Interviewer	<p>It seems as though what you're saying to me that you've realised, much the same as myself when I started P4C, that we don't give them [children] enough credit for the thinking that they are capable of...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, but like I was saying to you earlier, you do have hits and misses, like started doing that recording [audio recordings of P4C discussions with small groups of children] with one [particular] kid, a very intelligent kid, he was very imaginative but I wasn't getting much back from him, I probably wasn't giving him enough credit in some cases but other times some things just don't stick. And some kids, it just takes them longer to come out of that shell or whatever, but it has been great.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I know Declan has been big into it [P4C] but I would see that as a kind of "spark". Some of the teachers I've talked to, there seems to have been some kind of spark or awakening to the benefits or the possibilities of doing this sort of thing.</p>
Participant	<p>Do you know what's just after popping into my head there, when I was trying to explain how I was a bit cynical in college, it was a question that annoyed me and when I thought of philosophy I thought of this at certain stages, but it was the tree falling in the woods</p>

	<p>[philosophical thought experiment] and if there's no one around to hear it falling, is there really a sound. On reflection, it's not a bad question, but at the time it just really annoyed me or something! And for some reason then I suppose I would have written a lot of it off. But that's the question that used to annoy me!</p>
Interviewer	<p>Even Declan was talking there as well that there were just some questions, I mean we all <i>liked</i> it, I mean as children when something is being talked about that is curious, our ears pick up. And he was saying that he was getting annoyed that he wasn't getting answers, or probably he wasn't allowed to engage with the question or have a space to discuss it. And he dragged that [memory] all the way with him and said he wanted to right the wrong! But listen, thanks so much for taking the time to chat with me, it's very much appreciated.</p>
Participant	<p>No problem, thank you.</p>

Interview #03

Interviewee: Merriam (not real name), Rural school

Date: Friday 22th April 2016.

Participant	I really enjoyed seeing the session you did with my class, it was great.
Interviewer	Yeah, did you get much from it just for yourself?
Participant	Yeah, it was very good.
Interviewer	Just with that kind of age group [senior infants], that was the first time that I did that [conducted a philosophy session] with that kind of age, but anything really can be used a stimulus really, it's just about building up the process.
Participant	Something that they enjoy I suppose, they're obviously very familiar with animals so it's good to use something they're familiar with to try and explore.
Interviewer	Exactly.
Participant	The age range of that class now is quite [varied], there's still a girl there who's five, and that taller boy, he's seven. Now there's one girl and she was very good and she always gives good answers when I'm doing things in the [normal] class as well, but she's not even six yet. Like, my kid is nearly five and he's not even <i>in</i> school yet. So, there is still a big gap in age. And [the taller boy in the class], he's seven and he came from Denmark in September and he didn't even speak English when he came here, like he hadn't been speaking it, but he's absolutely fluent now.

Interviewer	Yeah, they [children] seem to pick [soak] it [language acquisition] up like a sponge [at that age], they're [children] so immersive.
Participant	I think his mam is some kind of a linguist, like she speaks six languages or something! So, he obviously gets it from her! He's a good kid.
Interviewer	So, I guess I'll just start off by asking you when did you first learn about philosophy with children, how did you first come across it?
Participant	I think it was at the conference [Educate Together Ethical Education conference, November 2015], when I saw the list of workshops that were available, there was Philosophy for Children [presented by Philomena Donnelly] and I thought "ok", and I just read the little blurb. And I thought "I'll do that so", that was basically my introduction to it. I'd already studied philosophy so I thought I could marry the two things together. I wouldn't have had any experience before that. I suppose it would have come up in college but it went over my head a bit. We did the philosophy in Trinity [academic undergraduate philosophy] so it was more the history of philosophy, it wasn't anything to do with kids, it was more about teaching us the history of it.
Interviewer	How do you see it fitting in with or coming together with your pedagogy, your normal day-to-day classroom teaching activities?
Participant	I definitely think that it ties in well with the Learn Together curriculum [Educate Together Ethical Education curriculum] as a way to discuss the topics that come up in it. It obviously gives a good link with literacy because if you're using books, because you can tie it in there with how the children understand them,

	<p>it's comprehension, you could look at it that way with them. Even stories, poems and even what you were doing there today [in a philosophy session I facilitated and which participant observed] about the democratic process, about taking turns, speaking, that's really important for them to learn. I've been trying to do that, but not in terms of philosophy, just like "these are the rules". So, it might be easier to establish it [democratic process] from the beginning through discussion rather than "these are the rules". Just so it then becomes part of the classroom environment or the classroom community. Like, that's how we speak to each other, that's how we listen to each other. It can link in with everything, so I would kind of be hoping that it wouldn't necessarily be a separate [standalone] thing, but that it would just permeate and that I would get used to asking the kind of questions that I need to ask to get the information [through to the children]. So, I suppose it would help me a bit more as a teacher as well to actually connect a bit more with the children, rather than just asking "a", "b", "c" questions. Maybe we can branch out a little bit I suppose.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think that doing something like philosophy for children could have some kind of influence how you view your role as a teacher?</p>
Participant	<p>I think you kind of have to let go of that control a little bit and allow the children to go off on little tangents and just let them explore that, because maybe we are so focused on the objective of our lesson, that children will know "x, y and z" at the end, we might see that little divergence as not being on our "plan". So, I suppose it might allow teachers to be able to be that little bit more relaxed and to see that if it [discussion] does diverge a little bit, it is still fruitful, something will come of it. But I suppose that's the way that I'd like to</p>

	<p>change, that I'm not so focused on a specific answer from the children that I would like [to hear] and I would like to know more about the children from their answers.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You mean, emphasising the <i>means</i> of getting to the answer rather than the answer itself?</p>
Participant	<p>Yes. And to listen. I don't think teachers actually listen. I know that some days I just <i>can't</i> listen. I need to get through all of this stuff today and I'm listening for the correct answer so I know that I've achieved my objective so I'm not really listening to the "side" answers. Like, when one of the boys [during the interviewer's P4C session] said he wanted to be a dragon and then he changed it to something else that was quite "fierce" as well and I thought "oh". It would give you an insight into some of the children's personalities I think as well, and a lot of them said the ones [animals] that could be friends were the ones that were the same [type of animal]. They didn't make the connection between other types of animals, it was just the ones that were the same. So, that was quite interesting and they're the kind of things I wouldn't know about my class and I wouldn't perhaps be aware about how that affects their relationships in the yard or in the classroom, or who they play with, who they don't play with. Those kind of things. I just think it would allow you to get to know the children better and them to get to know each other <i>and</i> themselves through the answers and through listening to each other.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Like even in that session that I just did there, I guess I had anticipated it to go one way, like them saying lions could be friends with tigers, but when it didn't you have to kind of change your questioning or alter your angle a little bit. But you mentioned there</p>

	<p>about listening to children, do you think there's a connection between philosophy with children and children's voices compared to, say, more "traditional" [didactic] classroom practices?</p>
Participant	<p>I think it [philosophy with children] gives children much more of an opportunity to speak and to listen to each other. Even the fact that instead of the teacher answering the question, like in your session when somebody asked "what is a ___?", you didn't answer yourself, you let somebody else explain. And I really liked that because usually it's left to me and I'm thinking "ugh, <i>another</i> question". But it just helped them to connect with each other, that they're helping each other out. So, I suppose it gives them more of a voice in the classroom and that's something I think traditionally we try to <i>not</i> encourage. Only perhaps at certain specific times, like circle time. Because the teacher is the one talking, you're [the child is] listening, and I ask a question that either has an answer or it doesn't have an answer – it's not necessarily a discussion or a debate, there's an answer. So, it does give them more of a voice in the classroom and if it was your approach in the classroom you'd be more inclined to listen to the children. Like even if you only started it as a small session during the day, at least for that time you <i>actually</i> listened to the children rather than <i>trying</i> to get them to go where <i>you</i> want them to go. That's what I found difficult [in participant's own P4C practice], I kind of had a pre-conceived idea in my head of an answer and I felt I was steering them towards it without necessarily listening to what they were saying. And to be able to sit back today and hear them was nice, I could make little inferences from what they were saying whereas I find a lot of teachers don't. We tend to, especially if they're young, to dismiss them and we tell them the right answer... or we teach them right answer!</p>

Interviewer	<p>Yeah, and like you mentioned there something what we might not have been used to ourselves when we were their age was not actually having a space or an opportunity to talk and be heard...</p>
Participant	<p>And they are <i>so</i> eager to do it. Any opportunity in the class, like if you mention something that's of interest to them, they immediately start to try to tell you <i>everything</i> and a lot of the time we just shut it down. We have to because it's like "ok, I have five minutes to finish this lesson!". Five minutes to actually finish this, tick it off my list and say I can move on to the next section. So, you tend to shut down a lot of the conversations that could be really interesting. Like, I saw a picture the other day and there was a small boy who put up his hand and asked "why is Pluto not a planet anymore?" and the teacher said "That's a very interesting question. But it's not on our test at the end of the year so we can't discuss it". Now, not that we have tests, but we do have objectives and we have a curriculum and we have to finish it, and we're under pressure from different angles to do this and implement new things and so on.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you see something like philosophy with children and the various curricular concerns being systematically opposed to each other, or can they be reconciled do you think?</p>
Participant	<p>I would hope that there is some way to do so. Like "Aistear" [early childhood curriculum framework] has been introduced which is kind of treated as a subject, but it's not. It's supposed to be a pedagogy to be used throughout the day.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What is "Aistear" exactly?</p>

Participant	<p>“Aistear” is basically learning through play. It would work more so with junior infants as a pedagogy throughout the whole day, because with senior infants you have to teach them how to read and write, you can’t do everything through sitting on the floor playing. But it’s what you saw there today, like our theme today was space. So, they have to learn about space, but part of what they’re doing is sitting down and making an oxygen tank. And while they’re doing it they’re chatting with each other – “oh yeah, because astronauts need oxygen, because there’s no oxygen there”. So, they’re talking about what they learnt, they’re teaching each other, they’re down the back pretending to be in the space station, sleeping in their pods, you know? So, that’s the point of it but it’s supposed to permeate the whole day as you move from different activities. It doesn’t. So, I don’t know. I would hope a philosophical approach could be implemented, but I suppose you’d have to educate teachers.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Perhaps if it is an “approach”, like a way of viewing it?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I mean I suppose teachers do a lot of it <i>already</i>, probably without realising it, they just don’t <i>call</i> it philosophy. But they do have Q&A sessions or discussions or circle time related to what’s the theme of the story or whatever. I mean they probably do it already but I guess we need to <i>listen</i> rather than just doing and saying “right, that’s <i>that</i> part of the lesson”. To just realise the reason why we’re doing it – to let the child to explore and to <i>think</i>. They don’t get a lot of time for <i>thinking</i>.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I know you mentioned you saw philosophy with children as compatible with the Learn Together curriculum, do you think there is a fit between</p>

	philosophy with children and [name of ET school] do you think?
Participant	<p>Well, I haven't ever discussed it with any of the other teachers. I actually don't know. I'm sure it would, because we do teach Learn Together. Like, <i>I'm</i> willing to try and introduce it to some of the other children, maybe in the older classes next year. So maybe if it was something you could show some of the other teachers that it was simple enough to integrate in, and that they're already doing it and that it's not something that they have to go and train for. It's not going to take up a lot of time, you don't even have to write a plan, it just becomes what you do for certain things. I'd say there is [a connection between P4C and current ET school], it's fairly open.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Would you say that, this particular school aside, it [philosophy with children] is compatible with a general Education Together "programme" or the movement as a whole?</p>
Participant	<p>I'm sure it does, they just need to show teachers that it's not something "extra". That perhaps it's already something that they do but to be more conscious of the fact that they're doing it. And maybe expand it a little bit more and set aside some time to practice it. Like you said, with the class you need to build up the democratic process, the listening, those skills. It could fit if they obviously make it so teachers don't see it as a burden.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think it lies with the teacher, like a certain "breed" of teacher is needed to do something like this, or is it skill set, or an inclination towards philosophy? I know you have a background in philosophy...</p>
Participant	<p>It might be a case of having an inclination</p>

	<p>towards it. I think when some people hear the word [philosophy], what they associate it with might not be that positive. Maybe they have <i>no</i> association, but they might think that it's just something really difficult.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I have thought about that before alright, that with the word [philosophy] there's an immediate kind of "dislike"...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I thought the same in the beginning. I thought "<i>How?</i>" How could you possibly do it with five year olds? Because I remember doing it in college and I thought this could never be done with five year olds, there's no way. It's difficult and people went mental, like they left college because they couldn't cope with all the thoughts. But when you look at the actual philosophy for children, it's different. It's not about teaching them the history of it or anything like that, it's just teaching them how to think and to be creative and not to accept things [at face value] and to question. To ask questions about everything. And I think...</p>
Interviewer	<p>It's more the <i>doing</i> of philosophy rather than the <i>studying</i> of it...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, or <i>learning</i> about it. But I think it could build better relationships between the children and their teacher, and between the children as well, so whether it takes a certain teacher, I don't know, but like I said if maybe they were afforded the opportunity to see it in action they might think "well I do that already, this is not a big deal!". Like if some teachers saw what you did today, they would be like "Oh, that's <i>philosophy</i>? That's how you do philosophy with children? I've already done that before". You see, what I think about the philosophy is, when you do it the way you did it with the kids like that I would be <i>listening</i> to their answers trying to find</p>

	<p>out about the children, so I'm actually paying way more attention to what they're saying than when I would be during a normal lesson. I would just take their answer and go "ok, next, next, next". But for that [interviewer P4C session] I was actually listening because I wanted to find out if there was anything underlying with some of them, some of the ones that skipped [passed on the opportunity to speak], just watching one of the ones that skipped and the next time he spoke because he had a problem [on the first occasion to speak]. So, he was able to think, maybe he couldn't think very, you know, on his feet [quickly] or without something solid. So, I definitely think that from the start of the year it would encourage teachers and students to listen to each other more, whether all teachers would want to listen is another story. But I do think it would make for a more harmonious class instead of fighting with them to stay quiet. If they [children] know that their voices will be heard at a time that is appropriate and they can talk to you [the teacher] and to each other, then there's an outlet for them at some stage during the day. Because that's what I find difficult for them they don't know when they can speak and when not to speak, they just want to blurt everything out and there's one or two who will keep on talking while there are others who will say very little, so they'll kind of "hog" things. Like you saw [during interviewer's P4C session] that there was a few that just wanted to keep on going, they didn't want to stop...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, but sure that happens even at the other end [more advanced enquirers], even with adults!</p>
Participant	<p>I mean, it's nice, it's nice when someone goes "ah, finally I can get this off my chest!". But a concern then is, especially with the little ones, that they could get bored.</p>

Interviewer	<p>Sure in a fifth class [ten to eleven years old] group that I conduct sessions with, sometimes some of them [the children] tend to add in some of the more anecdotal stuff and they tell a story and you say to yourself “ok, it might be time to give somebody else a chance” and just trying to hone it down a little bit to ask what is the purpose of what we’re doing, that developing of thinking, and that the telling of stories, which is great, is not quite the same.</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I think at this age they just want to tell you stories. But I think given the opportunity to do that at certain times during the day would create a better atmosphere in the classroom because like I said they know they have an outlet. Like, when you do “News” every Monday, they love it. I stop it because it starts to repeat itself. We have Show And Tell and they love that because it’s <i>their</i> time, everyone’s listening to them, teacher’s listening to them, I’m not being pulled left, right and centre by other children. And some of them are really good at understanding that “I can’t talk to her now because she’s in the middle of something” where others don’t, so allowing them that few minutes is good, they know they’ll be listened to which is great. I’m not sure if I answered any questions there really...</p>
Interviewer	<p>I think a lot of the things you’ve said has been similar to my own experience as well, and how I would be thinking myself. I think lastly I just wanted to ask you how would you perceive something like philosophy with children, whatever view you may have of it as either a “programme” or an approach, how would you perceive it in terms of democracy or educating for a democratic society?</p>
Participant	<p>Oh God. That’s a big question!</p>

Interviewer	<p>[laughs] I know I'm kind of putting you on the spot a bit, but I guess just in terms of how you understand it yourself, how you perceive the aims and purposes of it in relation to a democratic society...</p>
Participant	<p>Well, I would like the children to question things. I would be killed by their parents, but I want them to question everything that they're told and for them to say "is that real?", "who, me, you, that?", "why do I believe them?" or "have I seen something to prove it?". And to be able to say "well you know, I don't agree with you", and to feel safe in saying that, that it's ok to say that. To have an opinion without thinking "well that's not right, because I have a different opinion". So, I'd like them to be able to express their opinion safely and to bring that with them while having a respect for the other person's opinion as well, to not just accept things and say "well, my mammy told me..." or "my teacher told me..." Just because something happens doesn't mean it <i>should</i> be happening. Like, during Stay Safe [Child Abuse Prevention Programme] we were talking about touches and how if you didn't want anyone to touch your body or to hit or all those types of things, you didn't have to let it happen, you have a voice and you speak up for yourself. Like, nobody said anything specific but I said "nobody is allowed to hit you, even an adult. It's against the law." And I could see some of their faces [with amazement] and I know some of the adults don't agree with me tell children as young as that. But I said "no, it's the law and they deserve to know what their rights are", whether they decide to speak up about them [their rights] if an adult does hit them, I'm not <i>telling</i> them to do that, I'm just <i>informing</i> them of the fact. But I want them to know that they have a voice, that they can speak out, that they can say what they want to say without fear of someone telling them that "you're</p>

	wrong” and to carry that with them.
Interviewer	So, you think that questioning, and that openness to questioning is important for a democracy?
Participant	<p>Yes, but to not follow the crowd. Like, we did a whole school survey, it was under the SPHE strand [Social Personal and Health Education] but a lot of the older children, what came up [emerged] with some of them was that they lacked self-confidence, their self-esteem was low, they didn’t know if they were being manipulated by adults or other children. Like, a lot of the SPHE material is very out of date now and they are bringing out a new programme and stuff, but I was thinking that philosophy might slot in there, where we teach children that they have a voice, that they have value, their opinions have value, they don’t need to change their opinion because their friend doesn’t agree with them anymore. So initially I suppose that’s how I linked it with this school, because we are looking to improve the areas that are low, like self-esteem, self-confidence, bullying issues, all that kind of stuff. So, I thought it would link in there. I suppose that would then carry forward into society, if they learn good skills in school and to learn that’s it’s ok to say no, to be different. And I suppose that then is the ethos of Educate Together, you know, difference.</p>
Interviewer	You mean, like, to embrace those differences?
Participant	<p>We celebrate them, we applaud them. But even though that’s our ethos, how much of it actually happens with kids? You know, that they’re still very much influenced by outside forces as well, things that we [teachers] have no control over.</p>
Interviewer	You mean that it’s like one thing to have an

	ethos, but another to have an ethos in action almost?
Participant	<p>Yeah, exactly. And I know that there's a lot of work going on in this school around that, like we're drawing up a school charter and we're trying to work on a lot of the bullying issues in the school, so there is a lot of work going on around it, so I was hoping that this kind of thing [philosophy with children] could slot in with it as well. You know, just to be able to say to a child "you're <i>allowed</i> to say that, that's absolutely fine, just because you don't agree with that person doesn't make what you're saying wrong, no matter how much they shout at you". And just allow them to know that that's <i>true</i>. I'm not sure how well that answers your question...</p>
Interviewer	<p>No, no, sure it's been fascinating to hear you speak about these things, that was pretty much the bones of what I wanted to ask you and I've really enjoyed our conversation. Thanks so much for talking to me and allowing me to come down and conduct a session with your class, with such young children, I thought it was wonderful. And I think I mentioned before, the more they give [discussions and thoughts] the more you have to work with [philosophical "fuel"]. Sometimes I struggle because I really like picture books [for their philosophical potential] but I don't have access to them because I'm not a teacher and I don't have a budget to be buying them, so I said "well what <i>do</i> I have?". So, I got my hands on a load of finger puppets...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I thought it was brilliant and they [children] engaged with them because they're [finger puppets] something they're really familiar with, animals, they're familiar with toys...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yes, and they're tactile, they're colourful...</p>

Participant	Yeah, they get to fiddle with it and show it off...
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, and you could see the circle [that the children were sitting in] moving in closer and closer. And it kind of reminds me, like I really believe that they [groups of children in a class] have their <i>own</i> dynamic, they are young kinds, in the group I have a group [ten to eleven years old] where they are at the stage where they are noticing each other, boys and girls groups, they used never sit beside each other, now there's little notes being passed around, so I do think as an adult we are limited by their own dynamic of their groups, so I guess I just try to embrace it, sometimes there are good days sometimes there are bad days [regarding group behaviour].</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I think so because sometimes you're looking for 100% co-operation and I just forget what age they are sometimes and I'm kind of expecting them to all sit quietly and listen carefully without lying on the floor... I suppose my purpose for that would be to respect the person who is speaking and to be fair. I know it's hard for the people at the very end because they've stopped listening by the time they get around. So, I have to say "come on, guys, I need to bring you back here" and sometimes I could get annoyed and say "hey, they've listened to you, so sit up straight now, we've only two more people to go". So, I suppose it's the control. It's <i>hard</i> to let go of the control as a teacher. It's <i>hard</i> not to lead them to an answer you want to hear them give you...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, and that's like something we talked about earlier, it's hard because that would have been the tradition [teacher training college] which you [student teachers] would have been trained within, and it seems to me for a teacher to take something like this on, they</p>

	<p>[teachers] have to almost “reverse engineer” what they were told as “the case” in teacher training college. What’s your take on that?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, I know, it’s very different. Like, even this morning we put “Love” up on the board and I asked them “what <i>is</i> love?” and they were saying things like “it’s Like, but twice”, and I wrote it up [on the board] and I was going with it. But I wanted them to say it was a “feeling”, that’s what I <i>wanted</i> them to say. And I basically lead them until they got there through their questions, and that’s just not right, is it? I should have just been accepting of their answers. I kept saying “ok, can we touch it?”, “can we hear it?” and I wanted them to say “no, we feel it”. So, I don’t know, that doesn’t sound like philosophy to me, it sounds more like teacher-led stuff...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Well, what <i>is</i> philosophical is your self-reflective self-critical awareness <i>of</i> that. So, in a way... Like, what even <i>is</i> philosophy? I mean, there are plenty of people who think that philosophy is not pleasurable, that it’s a specific type of theoretical or analytical thought...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, like breaking things down...</p>
Interviewer	<p>I mean there would be some people, academic philosophers perhaps, who would very little time for this [philosophy with children] at all...</p>
Participant	<p>Really? Because they think it’s too “airy fairy” kind of?</p>
Interviewer	<p>I suppose so, something along those lines anyway! How would you view that?</p>
Participant	<p>That’s interesting, but I would still prefer there to</p>

	be some kind of structure although!
Interviewer	<p>Yes, that's probably needed [structure for P4C sessions] as a teacher. I mean, to me, it's [philosophy with children] a bit of a "managed democracy", sure we want democracy in the classroom but they are children and there's a certain amount of "management" to do. I mean when I came to [name of ET school] I didn't want to influence the opinion that you have of philosophy for children, I think there's a "natural" element to it...</p>
Participant	<p>Of course. Like, I didn't tell the children what they would be doing today. I just said we had a special activity planned and a visitor would be coming. But I did tell the parents who was coming and what you were going to be doing with them. So, they'll be asked about it today. The parents seemed to be into it, like they're fairly involved and they're kept up to date about what goes on.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What's your opinion of teachers like yourself who are interested in philosophy? Because it's relatively unheard of in [Irish] schools, even in it's current form or understanding [philosophy as an academic subject as opposed to philosophy with children]. Just for myself, these teachers show that there is hope about what it could potentially become...</p>
Participant	<p>Well you see, if it's brought in at junior cert it might start filtering down. Parents might say "oh, there's an exam on it at some stage, maybe we should start pushing for it in primary school". And when you have everybody on board, that's when things might start to happen. But I do think you can implement it simply enough in the classroom through games, through stories, without having to be really worried about it or thinking "am I doing this right?" because I don't think it really</p>

	<p>matters. If you can give the children time to speak and listen to each other and all the rest, you can't really go too far wrong. You know, it's not like you can teach them the wrong thing, that four multiplied by four is twenty! There's no prescription there, you can just do it and see what happens. Like, I didn't get much of a chance to do it with my class with everything that's being going on, but I am hoping to start it next year, just go with the flow and see what happens. And as I said I'll like to try it with some of the older classes as well just to see the difference between younger and older. I've said it to Raymond [school principal], he'll give me a junior class next year so I'll have that extra hour to prepare! I wouldn't mind doing it even as an afterschool activity.</p>
Interviewer	<p>It's funny, because if teachers doing something like this [P4C] think they're the only ones who might be thinking "am I doing <i>philosophy</i>", there's plenty of "philosophers" trying to grasp the exact same question!</p>
Participant	<p>[laughs] "What am I <i>doing</i>?" kind of thing! I remember in college there was this really big tall black haired curly haired fellow in Trinity [college] who just stood up at the top of the hall and just talked and talked and talked about the history of philosophy. And I remember writing down <i>reams</i> of notes and I then one day I just <i>stopped</i>.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So, you were just learning about the history of philosophy [rather than <i>doing</i> philosophy or learning how to <i>philosophise</i>]? That was my experience as well, I enjoyed some of the issues being brought up, the thought experiments, things like that...</p>
Participant	<p>I'm not really sure why I chose it because I didn't actually even know what it <i>meant</i>! I was seventeen and I</p>

	<p>was filling out the CAO [Central Applications Office, non-profit organisation responsible for processing undergraduate applications into Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Ireland]</p> <p>form and a girl that I knew had filled it [to study philosophy at Trinity college] so I filled it in, and I got accepted and I went and she differed for the year. So, I was up there [Trinity college, Dublin] on my own. I remember trying to write down a definition of what philosophy was and it was the first time I'd heard the word "aesthetic" and I thought "oh, I'm in trouble here". I'd been reading Stephen King! Over the summer I bought one of the books on the reading list and I just couldn't read it. I thought "I'm dead! What am I up to?" I did it anyway, like I got through it, but in fairness the subject I liked the most was psychology because it were more "grounded", if that makes sense.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I find when philosophy is attached to something else it becomes so much more interesting, like philosophy <i>of</i> something, like philosophy <i>of</i> history. And particularly when it is combined with education, all kinds of possibilities open up.</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, exactly.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Listen, thanks so much for talking to me, I really appreciate you taking the time to sit down and be interviewed.</p>
Participant	<p>No problem at, thanks a million for coming all the way out and best of luck with it [research project].</p>

Interview #04

Interviewee: Joan (not real name), Semi-rural secondary school

Date: Friday 29nd April 2016

Interviewer	<p>So Joan, I met yourself at the Educate Together Ethical Education conference late last year, so I just wanted to ask you how you first came to philosophy for children and how you first came to be introduced to it?</p>
Participant	<p>Ok, so we [name of ET school] were approached by Philomena [Donnelly, St. Patrick's College Drumcondra], she came in to speak to Alan [school principal] one time because Educate Together had asked her to present [a workshop] on philosophy among teenagers. Because she had never practiced it [with teenagers] before, like, her practice up to this [point] had been with primary school students, I think she wanted a bit of actual practical experience in a secondary school setting. So Alan approached myself and asked me if I was willing to involve myself in the project with her for six weeks, and I said to her if we're going to do it I think it would be interesting to do it with a first year group [twelve to thirteen years old] <i>and</i> a second year group [thirteen to fourteen years old]. Purely from the perspective that you'd have very different responses from each of the groups. And even when we started to do it, she found that [to be the case] very quickly, depending on the topic you introduced or how deeply they might go into the conversation. So we had a first year group and a second year group for six weeks. Five of those weeks Philomena conducted the session for the most part while I [co-] facilitated, and then for one of the weeks I did the session myself because Philomena wasn't available. So I kind of led it</p>

	<p>myself then and very much followed on from what had I observed her do, I think it was after three weeks when she left me on my own for the week and I did one week of it by myself.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And so now you run an ethics class, is it?</p>
Participant	<p>Well the ethics [class] has been running all year, so the idea of philosophy kind of sat in [with] some of the concepts we were looking at in ethics, so at the very beginning we were looking at the whole idea of values and how you treat others according to the values that are important to you. One of the things we had discussed in philosophy then was around people and animals, and do we value them differently, do we put the same value on them? So I think it kind of linked in nicely with what we had started to do in the ethics class.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok, because I was going to ask you why you chose ethics over, say, anything else [philosophical subject], but you felt it was a good fit obviously?</p>
Participant	<p>Actually, because of the way it worked, it suited because I had a first year class and a second year class one after the other, so the first year class was an ethics class but the second year class was my CSPE [Civic, Social and Personal Education] class. So, we were dealing with the same topics, so if we doing, say, animals, we would be doing the same thing with the second years. I think it was more about the practice of what we were doing rather than the subject matter each week.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So do find something about philosophy with children quite applicable with certain subjects, or not perhaps? I know you said there that it linked in with your CSPE class...</p>

<p>Participant</p>	<p>Yeah, I can see it being useful in certain subject areas, definitely in relation to ethics and CSPE, it's a nice way at looking at something. I can see you being able to bring the ideas of it in to a history class, a geography class. So even say, I'm doing the Industrial Revolution at the minute, so we're doing the whole idea of the development of factories and how people's lives were valued, and were they really <i>valued</i>? If you couldn't do your job or your arm was chopped off, there was somebody else coming [in] behind you to do the job. So you can kind of get them to engage in that kind of idea. But you're asking them to think about something like that <i>within</i> [during] history class. And likewise in geography you could do it in the area of development. But I think, and I find this myself sometimes, you have to be prepared for where that conversation might go. Like, are you going to find yourself in a situation where you literally have to cut it dead because it's veering off track. So I can see the opportunity to bring it into a certain subject, but you'd also have to look then and see do you need to say to the children "right, we've had a great little chat about this, but we need to get back to what I need to teach you about the Industrial Revolution" or whatever it is.</p>
<p>Interviewer</p>	<p>Right, so is it fair to say constraints within the curriculum are a concern for you...</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>Yes. So I think if it's going to be facilitated as a subject in itself, I really like the idea of it and I think students have a huge amount to benefit from it. I think even their ability to think about an issue, or I suppose even to try and <i>phrase</i> their thinking around something, because they have to be able to put their argument across and even pick up on something that somebody else says. I saw them [students] develop skills in relation to that over the six weeks and they are really</p>

	<p>transferable skills when it comes to <i>any</i> subject matter. So I would see the benefit of philosophy more so in the skills that they pick up rather than the actual subject matter of the lesson.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok, so you can see advantages of having so called “transferable skills” like that I take it. In terms of the aims and purposes of philosophy with children, how much would agree or disagree that it works toward democratic education or a democratic society? I know you mentioned transferable skills in a “curricular” sense, is there any reason you would think that it might try to step beyond curriculum constraints?</p>
Participant	<p>So, even from a point of view of their personal development – are there skills they will be able to use beyond the school environment? Definitely. Because even the ability to have your own thinking challenged on something and to be able to walk away from an argument and say “ok, I wasn’t 100% right there” or “I didn’t know everything about this” or “someone has opened up a totally different view of this particular subject to me”, like, that is a skill that I think a lot of adults are without. So I think from a very young age, if children and teens are getting used to that idea, that there’s nothing wrong with someone challenging everything I’m saying, or expecting me to live up to the statements I’m coming out with, I think that’s a very worthwhile thing. And definitely something that if you’re learning those skills, they become part of who you are and how you’re living your life. So definitely, it is something that they can bring with them.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think what you just said there is a little bit like when you mentioned that it’s not so much about learning the content of what you’re doing [subject matter], it’s more about the <i>doing</i> of it [philosophising].</p>

	Do you think the practice of something like that [philosophy with children], has it affected how you view your role as a teacher?
Participant	<p>Definitely, because I think, and in particular when teaching a subject like ethics, I'm not there to tell you "this is what you should do", I'm there to get you to think "do I know what I should do and what am I basing this decision on?" So like, even there today when I was discussing the idea of equality, it's not up to me to stand at the top of the room and say "equality is x, y, z", they need to be able to work their way through it and say that "well, you know, equality doesn't always mean the same thing in every different circumstance". Like, that's very important. My teaching background would be Irish and history which are quite factual, "this is what I need you to know, this is what I need you to be able to do" at the end of the time [class, school period etc.]. And it's actually lovely as a teacher to be teaching something where that's <i>not</i> the aim. The actual finished product, "can you write me an essay about the philosophical thinking of whoever", that's not the aim here, it's more "what do you now <i>think</i>?". And even in designing our ethics programme, we're only on year two of it now, what we have been asking kids to do was to kind of keep a portfolio, like just scrapbook of pieces and different bits and pieces, the idea being that at the end of third year they'll be able to look back and ask "have I become a more ethical individual?", "do I look at issues differently?", "do I consider different things?" and to kind of hopefully, and this is the aim, to get them to be able to trace back and see "at what point did I maybe start to think of things differently?" or "did I start to say to myself do I have the whole picture here?" when you're looking at different aspects, whether it's religion or cultures or whatever. So, we're hoping that they'll be able to trace their own ethical development as such in</p>

	their own thinking.
Interviewer	<p>So that appreciation, as it were, that you have of doing philosophy with children, do you think that can be boiled down to any one particular reason, like a skillset or an outlook or disposition for philosophy on your behalf?</p>
Participant	<p>I would very much put it down to disposition and skills. I teach, what is it, sixteen or seventeen years now. So I'm quite comfortable when things don't go the way I thought they would go. And when it comes to teaching something like philosophy, you have to be prepared to say "this was where I <i>thought</i> this was going to go, and actually I spent the hour nowhere <i>near</i> that". But it kind of reflects the fact that my understanding of something might be very different from where a first year or a second year class need to <i>start</i> off their discussion. So, like, one day we had spoken about justice and is it a "just" society, and even that word itself, the first years were looking around at each other thinking "don't know". And it was only when we broke down the word, they thought "ah, ok!" So that was a situation where you thought you were starting at a certain pace, but you had to bring it back three or four notches, and I think as a teacher, if you don't have the skills or the ability to start again or say "ok, I got this wrong, I need to start at a different place", those kind of lessons will fall flat on their face. So I suppose you do need the confidence to be able to change things around or swing it or change it to what they need.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So that experience you think allows you to adapt?</p>
Participant	<p>I'd be comfortable with it now and even I went to the NCCA [National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment] curriculum development for philosophy</p>

	<p>[consultation on junior cycle short course in philosophy], so I have the kind of outline for what it will be, and I've asked the other ethics teachers to have a look at it and see if there are elements of it that we could introduce into third year [junior certificate exam year]. And say, even if we only did, what is there, eight or nine different proposed modules or topics to pick from, so even if we were only to, say, explore two of them, we could see how did it go, is it worth doing, is there something we could build in from first year in ethics and see would it work, does it get them thinking, does the style of lesson suit, so I'm very keen. While I don't think I could ask [other] teachers to take on board doing philosophy as a short course at the minute because they don't have any experience of it or any training in it, I would be very keen to say to them "can we open it up as a possibility, as a kind of trial and see how it runs". So <i>I'm</i> hoping to build a bit of it in, but then again there are seven teachers teaching ethics in school here. So out of the seven of us, we could all have very different opinions and experiences of actual classrooms.</p>
Interviewee	<p>I see. I've been asking you about teachers, but in terms of children's voices, do you think there are any differences between philosophy with children pedagogies and maybe what I might call more "traditional" classroom pedagogies? And if so, what do you think that is?</p>
Participant	<p>I think that probably comes back down again to your style as a teacher. So I would be very keen on the whole "we have to listen to one another" idea and to taking turns, like if they were working in a group I would want to see somebody different speaking this time or addressing the group this time. So you're always very conscious of the fact that you have to keep</p>

	<p>encouraging <i>other</i> people to speak instead of just hearing the one voice. The one thing that I did like about the philosophy practice and having them in the circle, everyone moving [the speaking object] around did encourage everyone to speak, and because I was giving Philomena reports and feedback [for the research study], I said to her that I didn't like the fact that they were able to pass [pass on their turn to speak in the community of enquiry]. The first week or so she said "well look, we'll let them just pass if they want to" and I thought "well, that's kind of a cop out in certain circumstances" so I asked her on different weeks if we could introduce something where they'd have to say "I'm not sure what to say because I'm confused about..." or they had to add some thing or just to give a reason why they didn't want to talk. Or even if they wanted to say "I agree with somebody's opinion", they could give that but they had to follow it on with something. And that was just to say to them "you <i>are</i> able to say something, you just need to give <i>yourself</i> the chance", and if we were giving them even the prompt, like, that first bit where they were able to say "I got thinking about it <i>because...</i>", it gave them somewhere to begin from and start their sentence. And I think for some of the children, that definitely helped them. And the minute they got confident I suppose, it helped them the following week and so on. Now the one thing I will add to that is that it would have been great if it was more than just once on a Friday. So I think if you were going to introduce this kind of practice, if they got to do it, even in just two classes, so let's just say it was ethics and another different subject, you'd be doing your subject but following the same kind of methodology, the same ideas behind it. Just to get them familiar with the process in it and to gain the confidence in it.</p>
Interviewer	So you had to structure the way forward quite a

	bit then...
Participant	<p>Yes, that helped. I mean, the first week was very difficult Because they were kind of looking at me going “what are we doing here, why are we sitting in big circle?”, but I think as they got more comfortable with it, they got more confident. But then, to look at the other extreme, we had the second year group we had three or four people who dominated [the discussion]. And I think as the six weeks went on that became very obvious and you’d nearly have to say “ok, thanks for your contribution, but let’s move on”. So it’s something you’d have to be aware of within the group that you’re dealing with because actually it was visibly turning other people off, because you’d have maybe two people dominating the conversation, perhaps trying to sound more intelligent or intimidate some of the others in their thinking, and that was something that I hadn’t expected and when it started to appear, I remember looking at Philomena going “we’re going to have to address this”, because to a certain extent it did discourage some of the rest of the group. So, that’s something to be conscious of, while you’re trying to encourage everybody, you have to be conscious of their own personalities as well.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So do you think, then, that that structuring of the discussion and the providing of a space for them [children] to speak, do you think that it [philosophy with children] should be [a] completely stand-alone [subject] or can it be integrated into a normal curriculum class?</p>
Participant	<p>There’s the ability [potential] to build it in, but, like anything like this, you have to factor in [the question] “if I’m building this in, am I doing it with a particular purpose in mind, or am I doing it just as a means of ticking a box and exploring it as a methodology?” So if I wanted to build this into a certain</p>

	<p>subject, what's my aim for building it in [in the first place]? Am I doing it because I'd like them to think about something differently? Am I doing it just because I want them to pick up the skills? Am I doing it because I see the value [it has] for the subject matter that I'm doing? And again, so history is my subject, if I was going to say I'm going to try and build this kind of format into maybe, discussing the Reformation with them, their knowledge of the Reformation [as it stands] is very limited, so I have to take into consideration if I want to build it into a curricular subject do I teach them the subject first? And if I do do that, am I influencing what their going to say by the way I've taught it? I'm probably not explaining that very well, but I do feel that by building it into curricular subjects you are presuming they have a background knowledge of certain things. Even if you take something like CSPE, I'm doing, say, law and order and things like this, even if you were to go into a conversation around the laws in Ireland, like they don't know what the laws are, they don't know the age of criminal responsibility in Ireland until I looked it up and I told them. So to have a conversation around that I had to have given them a bit of knowledge first, and so is the knowledge that I've given them skewing their interpretation of what it is then because I'm only giving them <i>certain</i> information?</p>
Interviewer	<p>So, does that mean your being aware of the potential influence on their thinking is a democratic concern for you?</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, because I present material to them in a certain way. So I am naturally, whether I realise it or not, my bias towards a certain subject <i>has</i> to come out somehow in how I choose to show it. Like, if I was to do the Holocaust with a third year class, how I choose to deal with that material influences their take up of it. I</p>

	<p>can give them a fact, but I'm still going to present that fact in a certain manner. It's very difficult to remove yourself from what you're teaching because you're instantly influencing what they're picking up.</p>
Interviewer	<p>But that awareness in itself can be seen as a positive step...</p>
Participant	<p>Well it is, but I would say, is every teacher aware of that slant that they put on things? Probably not. And even when you're thinking of topics or subject matter, there's a lot of things people would never think of or <i>want</i> to introduce, so I suppose it's a case of trying to find relevance for things that they will "bite at" rather than me trying to shove something down their throat.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What aims and practices of philosophy with children do you think might have some similarities with the aims and practices of [name of ET school]? Or do you think there are any [similarities] at all?</p>
Participant	<p>I do. I think it's been really interesting for me coming to teach in a <i>very</i> different environment, because I spent fourteen years or so teaching in a Deis school [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: an action plan for educational inclusion], a difficult teaching environment. And I know to had I had done some of the subject matter and some of the classes that I do here, to have tried to do something like that [philosophy with children] in my previous teaching experience would have been very very difficult. And it's something that I highlighted at the NCCA [conference], that this [philosophy with children] is a subject that so many schools could benefit from, and yet I think it's something that's going to frighten a lot of teachers and a lot of schools because it is opening up the classroom <i>way</i> more than a lot of teachers would be comfortable</p>

doing. But because here we do have a value of making sure we're listening to the students and getting them to explore their [own] learning moreso than us [teachers] being the dictator of the classroom and saying "this is what you're going to learn". It's very much about them being able to look at a topic and being able to piece it together themselves and for us [teachers] to be able to identify "this is where I need to feed into a bit more" to help them [students] scaffold what they're trying to learn. But instead of me saying "this is how we are going to learn this", I can start off by seeing that they have gotten this bit [understood a certain idea] but I just need to shove it up a little bit to start it going to where we want it to go. So I suppose that's been a very nice experience. And in general, I have found the kids here very open, very open to experiences, very tolerant of what you're throwing out there. There doesn't seem to be the same parental influence, that they're hearing certain things at home and bringing into the classroom, shouting at you. I have taught classes CSPE before and you could start to do a class on racism or different kinds of those issues, and all you're hearing is opinions that you *know* are coming from home and they're not open to any of that being challenged. Now what I have seen here [in participant's school] is that doesn't seem to be the case. Now, I don't know if that is a reflection of, to be honest, the socio-economic background that they're coming from, or maybe a reflection of, bringing it back to whole idea of Educate Together, is it that these children have been to an Educate Together primary school? That we are actually seeing the influence of that coming up now [in secondary school]? I think statistically, we don't have a huge amount that have transferred [come from a non-Educate Together primary school background or transferred from another secondary school], but if there is that element [most of the children come from an Educate Together primary

	<p>school], is it actually having a positive effect on the rest of the kids? Or is there just more openness and tolerance out there [in general society nowadays]?</p>
Interviewer	<p>So when you say you would have had difficulties in previous schools [engaging in P4C] and then the sense [of openness] that you get here [name of ET school], is it fair to assume a mismatch between the two [previous schools and Educate Together]? Is there a difference there and how might you describe it if there is?</p>
Participant	<p>I suppose from the point of view of a teaching atmosphere and a school atmosphere, it's way more open, it's much more co-operative, there's the ability to be able to feel more confident in what you want to do as a teacher, because if the students here are much more open to being challenged, you're more inclined to say "well, I'm going to take that a step higher, you responded well to what I did the last day, so I wonder if I took it up a notch..." Whereas if you're in a school where you try something and it falls flat on its face, you're constantly trying to start off and find some way <i>in</i>, so I don't think you ever get to the point where you're building the challenges as much as when compared to where I find myself doing it here. Because I even find in my curricular subjects, your way of approaching the teaching of it is quite different, you know, I don't kind of feel that they've been sitting in front of me now for forty minutes, I've managed to get you to sit down and be good and now this is what I need to get you to do. There just isn't a lot of those issues. You can explore the topic more and link it more than you would have had time to do in a different school environment.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Very good. I've really enjoyed listening to your</p>

	<p>experience of philosophy with children and the various ways you link it up. I suppose that is generally what I was interested in hearing what you had to say on a few of those topics, thank you very much for taking the time to chat with me today.</p>
Participant	<p>My pleasure, thanks very much.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Also, just to keep you in the loop, myself and a few other people formed a group, Philosophy Ireland, where we're advocating philosophical discourse and dialogue in Irish society and one of those areas would be schools, eventually we're hoping to hold workshops and CPD courses for teachers interested in philosophy in their classrooms and I'd be happy to keep you informed of developments like those.</p>
Participant	<p>Brilliant. I mean, to be perfectly honest, if they [Dept. of Education] want the whole philosophy to take off, number one – they need to open it up to a variety of teachers. That's the one thing I noticed about the NCCA [consultation on junior cycle short course in philosophy], there were groups of teachers who had a philosophy background or a theology background that were very much [of the opinion] "only someone with a background in this can teach that". And I was thinking, "well, that's going to create a very elitist subject", and I think that defeats the whole purpose of a subject like that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>It is a bit of a bugbear of mine that there is this stigma attached to philosophy, people hear the word "philosophy" and think "ancient Greece, very difficult to understand" and my response is "no, we're talking about <i>doing</i> philosophy, as a pedagogy". I mean, I know we're only talking about an optional short course for the Junior Certificate, but I did like the fact that the NCCA</p>

	has emphasised philosophical enquiry and discussion [in their preliminary curriculum].
Participant	<p>Yes, I really liked the idea of the course, and the one thing I did pick up on was, for want of a better word, the “snobbery” that I felt was around it [the subject of philosophy] in certain respects. And I thought if that’s how this is going to be packaged, schools <i>will not</i> take it up. If you really think about it, how many people would you find teaching in schools that actually have a degree in philosophy? There isn’t going to be that many!</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yes, and with the type of practice that it is, it is very hard to compare it with other subjects that might be more didactic and direct [in their approach to teaching], it’s very developmental I think...</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, and I think as well if you think about the level you’re going to be operating on, with first to third years, I don’t think a degree in philosophy or theology is necessary to be able to explore something like this. And I think if you want to get people on board or to train teachers to embrace it, it has to be done, I suppose on a very human level, rather than it being a kind of “we’re going to teach you what to do” type of thing. Because as I said earlier on, there are a lot of teachers with the skills to do this if they were given the direction, if [they were to be told] “do you know what, you’d actually find this very easy because all you need to do really is to sit, <i>listen</i>, pick up on what’s being said and keep the conversation”. To keep the conversation challenging or interesting to everybody that’s there. A lot of teachers probably already have those skills. They just haven’t had to develop them or practice them with a different subject matter in mind. So I’d like to think that it’ll [junior cycle short course on philosophy] be kept</p>

	open and it'll be opened up to as many teachers as possible.
Interviewer	<p>Exactly, because I think a lot teachers get to a point after teacher training college, after they have cemented what they <i>need</i> to do, resources, portfolios, classroom management etc. to where they realise that they can do <i>more</i> in the role that they are in. But rather than just adding it onto an already massive pile will not help the situation, it won't help new student teachers at all with another thing that needs to "rolled out", maybe by taking smaller steps...</p>
Participant	<p>I think introducing schools to the idea of it. To be perfectly honest, it's not going to be a methodology that's going to be foreign to teachers. The format of it isn't going to be all that different. I suppose it's just being able to conduct the discussion. Like the one lesson that I did on my own was [based around the question] "is it ever ok to tell a lie?" so I started researching this idea and who came up with it and I thought "that's a bit too much for me now, I'm not going to start introducing that to first and second years". So I tried different scenarios and [the notion of] a "white lie", and a "mercy lie", and we were just looking at it from different perspectives. But even when we started off and I had got them to grade themselves from one to ten [regarding how much they agreed or disagreed] about telling a lie and I got them to do it again at the end [of the session]. And even that in itself, you could see the differences in their thinking, where they would have been [previously] "no, it's wrong, I've never done it" to where they were going "well, let's be honest, I had done it and I would do it". The first week I was doing that on my own I was quite apprehensive. And when I had done that lesson with the first years I thought "oh, that was grand, that went ok", and when I</p>

	<p>did the same lesson with the second years it had gone off on a totally different tangent. It went from “would I tell a lie” or “should I tell a lie” to “well, who am I telling the lie <i>to</i>?” And it went down the road of valuing certain people more than others. And I did those two lessons back to back, so it was two hours of very different experiences on the same topic. It was very enjoyable but very different and I was anxious starting it, but having led the lessons on my own... I actually should have mentioned to Philomena to do a lesson where I would lead it and she observed, I’m actually sorry that we didn’t do that now in the six weeks that we did, because I would have liked to have seen how it went and what her perspective of it was, being able to see and watch them rather than having to think “oh, where am I going to bring this next”. But it is something that definitely I would hope I can get the other teachers [in participant’s school] to bring on board a little bit. I think if we can try and get someone in to just explain what the expectations of it are. Like, it’s one thing me saying it to them. But if someone else, I had asked Philomena to see if she could come in, just to put everybody at ease as regards what it is. That would be very valuable to have people to start going out into schools like that.</p>
Interviewer	<p>To quell the “air of mystery” that surrounds philosophy and “ancient Greece” and all that stuff? [laughs]</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, but like, maybe to even have a tagline with it or, I don’t know, to have it branded as “discussion” or something. Just the word itself, “philosophy”, it does have implications for teachers and they just go “oh no, I don’t want to go there”, “I don’t teach any of those airy fairy CSPE subjects”, a lot of people just won’t go there at all. But that’s not to say if they were exposed to the</p>

	idea and the thinking of it they wouldn't actually quite enjoy it. So I suppose how it's "marketed" to schools will make a really really big difference.
Interviewer	That's great, thanks so much for chatting today.
Participant	No problem whatsoever.

Interview #05

Interviewee: John (not real name), Suburban lived school

Date: Friday 6th May 2016

Interviewer	So firstly I'd just like to know how you first came across philosophy with children.
Participant	<p>So, originally, I suppose I would have seen snippets of it in England, never formally, I would have maybe read articles out of a just a personal interest in philosophy but also in not sticking completely to the curriculum. Even when I was training [as a teacher] I was always looking at other avenues with which to engage children that would kind of have an impact in the primary [school] setting. So I always had in the back of my mind, like the “apple on the head” moment was when I went to[nearby ET school] for a book launch by Josephine Russell [author of How Children Become Moral Selves] and it was just amazing. Everything she was saying was just what I was thinking, and what I was thinking next was what she'd say next. And I thought "this is brilliant, this exactly what I've been thinking and trying to formulate and how to do philosophy", you know, how to get children not “behave” in a certain way, but how to interact with each other in a certain way or to experience education in a different way. Everything she said based on her research and based on her notes, I mean what did she do, she spent a lot of time with her class, annotated what she was doing and then put a book together, so I just felt all of that was excellent and from that moment I just thought I'm not going to let this moment pass without immediately trying to initiate it into my own class. That was 2008 I think and since then I've been using it to great effect.</p>

Interviewer	<p>So what were the things within it [philosophy with children] that made it attractive for you, I know you mentioned children's interaction there...</p>
Participant	<p>Well, the collaborative nature of it. Number one, everyone's sitting around and we're there together and we're deciding that we're going to have a chat about something and we do a little warm up or whatever, and once everyone has spoken [as a warm-up] her [Russell's] view was that they [children] are more likely to speak later [on in the session] and I totally agree with that. But also, like, I could do it [philosophy with children] everyday and I'd love to do it everyday but I don't. I like doing it in the formal setting [standalone] of "Right guys, we're going to do some Thinking Time". Like, I always call it Thinking Time because that's what she [Russell] calls it and that's what I call the blog [name of ET school website section] and stuff. But just even the children, the calmness of them setting up their chairs and sitting around, the excitement, the anticipation of "oh, what are we going to talk about next?", to think that a group of humans, never mind children, could get that kind of energy out of just wanting to sit down and discuss something is so amazing and powerful to me. And I think if that's what they could teach other people going forward, like just communities of enquiry, of dialogue, of respect and listening to each other, of disagreeing in a very safe and supportive environment, and just really good interaction, personal interaction.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Is there an element of equality [in philosophy for children] for you?</p>
Participant	<p>Absolutely. Very much so. I'd always be happy to give my own opinion, like I'd often say during the introduction, I'd remind them of how our minds work or</p>

	<p>how I would have thought ten or fifteen years ago like when I was starting out [teaching] and it might be completely different now and why do I think differently now, well number one is because I've talked to people, I've listened to people, I've read stuff, I've watched things, I've experienced things and experienced life in teaching, all these things, like, my opinions would have changed and I was trying to get across to them that that's ok too. The reasons why they changed was because, you know, being inspired by different people, developing my own thinking and looking further into what I think and seeing is there different angles to stuff and what would people who disagree with me think, and all these things that would be based on those kind of Socratic questioning techniques. But that mindset, that it's ok to have an opinion, to share it and it's ok if your opinion changes over time subtly. And if that's based on, just more knowledge that's absolutely fine. So it's a slow process [understanding] that they don't have to agree with someone they like or they are friendly with, and that comes across. It's so easy to give a personal example [of a lived experience that they can relate to], there's an integrity to it and an equality to it, I'm telling them my story, they're telling me their story and they realise that their opinions are shaped by their lives, their family circumstances, their life circumstances, maybe even their faith circumstances and they're happy to share their opinion as it is now. And there's no fuss [sense] that <i>that</i> is all that I [child] can ever think, that <i>that</i> is my only opinion. They are very open to listening to others and that's the kind of community and the kind of society, that I want anyway, so I feel it's a step towards that, a more harmonious society.</p>
Interviewer	<p>That's really interesting to hear you say that about emphasising the changing of opinions being part and parcel of our lives, that message of growing and</p>

	development of our thinking that continues through life, even at their [children's] young age and you as a teacher, being aware of that...
Participant	<p>There's a great comfort in that for humans, for adults as well as children, and I think when you realise that that [to change one's opinion] is ok, that's where that comfort comes, and from that comfort comes self-confidence, kind of self-esteem. And I have noticed that it improves, that self-confidence improves. That kind of [idea that] "you know what, it's ok if I have other opinions, it's ok if I don't necessarily share what my best friend thinks, that's ok too, it's ok with him and it's ok with me and it's ok with the teacher", so there's a lovely ease to it [philosophy with children]. It definitely fosters a kind of an atmosphere of relaxation in your own skin, in your own thoughts and what's coming out of you.</p>
Interviewer	Do you think practicing philosophy with children has influenced how you view your role as a teacher?
Participant	<p>Oh absolutely, yeah. I would say heavily [influences], yeah. Like I often forget how what I was like and I taught in the beginning [of my teaching career] simply because this is so important and so influential, I'd almost be afraid to look at my thoughts were before I looked into this type of practice. Like, how did I participate when they [children] asked me something, oral lessons or speaking and listening lessons, like how did they actually feel when we were doing those lessons, like when we were just following a book or a workshop or doing some questions and answers and following some prompts, I kind of shudder about how much opportunity I would have lost back then before I started this practice. I think, not only in school but also the difference I could have made on the board of management [of current school], or anywhere,</p>

	<p>anywhere there is a community, anywhere where there's people discussing topics like that [philosophical pedagogies], I feel that what I've learnt makes me able to, or it allows me to share my opinions, to not be stressed or bothered about opinions that are completely different to mine. I think it's helped me a person just as much as a teacher if I'm honest. Even my own children and my wife and in my family relationships, all of those kind of things. It sounds almost too good to be true but that's the experience I've had with it anyway.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I remember one teacher I talked with who mentioned that I was lucky in that I escaped the more didactic or prescriptive approaches to teaching that she was taught in teacher training college [since I have never trained as a qualified teacher] and my thought was to engage with something like philosophy with children it seems that a teacher might have to almost "reverse engineer" some of the things that were given as true whilst training to be a teacher...</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, and simply because, and like with the best will in the world, you find maybe that when you follow the textbook or what you've been taught or your lecture notes, or something maybe like that, you're not engaging everyone in the class. This [philosophy with children] is a method teaching, a method of learning more importantly, that <i>does</i> engage everyone. And even if the people [in the community of enquiry] don't speak and they pass [on their opportunity to speak], whatever it is, they are listening, <i>actively</i> listening, they might be listening better than they ever have in their life, they might be hearing more than they've ever heard in their life, so I'm even comfortable with that. Because they are learning and they are engaged. So yeah, what you learn in college, good and all as it is, it might be good at getting thirty percent of the class better to express</p>

	<p>themselves, but not one hundred percent. But, like I said about it being almost too good to be true, the people who haven't tried it or haven't stuck with it or haven't <i>believed</i> in it would say something completely different. So for me personally, it's unbelievable. So maybe you are lucky!</p>
Interviewer	<p>Well, I'm not so sure about that, there are pros and cons [to philosophy with children] as well! But you mentioned about it being a method of <i>learning</i> as well as teaching, so in terms of children's voices how does it factor in that regard in your experience?</p>
Participant	<p>Well, I don't know if it is intended to be, but it is a form for them to express themselves, for them to have the stage, for the to have a turn, for them to <i>listened</i> to, particularly by their peers and their teachers. It's confidence building, it's game-changing if they're the type of child that doesn't or won't engage or is afraid to engage but is happy to listen until eventually after three or four five weeks they want to share some opinion or they want to initiate some discussion by coming up to you quietly and give you a note saying they'd love to talk about this [subject] or they'd love the group to talk about this. They are absolute "bingo" moments because you know they that they have been learning all the way along and you know that they have the tools to participate and you know that their confidence is growing so they will [participate] eventually. So all the boxes with regard to what I believe is important in primary education are being ticked. So I do think it's the perfect vehicle for building their self-esteem, their confidence, all of those things that are self-regulatory, they're making decisions for themselves. There's no indecisiveness, not being able to make a stance, will I won't I, being obsessed with consequences, don't do that or you'll get in trouble, none of that. So they're self-</p>

	<p>regulating. A lot of that is a by-product of doing Thinking Time or the P4C I think, a very welcome side affect.</p>
Interviewer	<p>How do you think those [side affects] relate to more traditional or conventional classroom approaches and practices?</p>
Participant	<p>Well, if you take something like debating just for instances, where someone might say "oh that's great to introduce to the class, you're having a debate". But that's the exact opposite in my eyes, where with a debate you're just trying to win an argument, you're trying to win regardless of what your opinion is, if you're on one side you have to fight for that side. I think that brings with it a lot of pressure. A lot of the curriculum [National School Curriculum] brings that pressure too where there's right and there's wrong, there's getting good marks in your test or there's <i>not</i> getting good marks in your test, there's your mother getting stressed with you when you're having difficulties doing your homework, this [philosophy with children] seems to side step all of that. And the learning is arguably more life-skill based <i>while</i> addressing some issue maybe in history or in English, whatever it may be, wherever you find the stories [discussion topics] coming from, whether it's in English [class], current affairs or whether it's something that's happening right now, something that's coming from a worry or an anxiety from the news, wherever the story may be found, whatever it may be, to talk about it like that I've found is the <i>most</i> effective way.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Are there any similarities between your philosophy with children practice and [name of ET school] do you think?</p>

Participant	Like our ethos, is it?
Interviewer	Yeah, like ethos, approach, an attitude or an aim that is being leaned towards, whatever angle think yourself.
Participant	<p>Well I think if I was in a new school or a different setting, I'm thinking even that my wife is a teacher and if I had to go out and work in her school, I'm not sure how welcome or how open the principal or any of my fellow colleagues would be if they saw me doing 15 hours a week of this, like I'm not sure how it would be viewed. I know personally in our own school by talking to board of management and all the way down, some people for sure don't buy into it at all, they just haven't really looked into it. But the <i>majority</i> of people in our school, whereas they may not like the complexity of some of the stuff [philosophy with children theory], they would see the benefit of it, and to be honest they would see the benefit even in the children's interaction, around the school and stuff like that. I think it fits perfectly with the school ethos, the child-centredness and the equality-basedness, you know, you do espouse all of these things, but this is a way to have them in action <i>in</i> the classroom, not just outside parading under everyone getting to hold a meeting in a hall, like that's not equality, that just timetabling. So this is a very practical way of saying "your voice is as valuable as a voice in society as my voice as the teacher". And that's something I really push all the time, we're just twenty seven humans [class teacher and students] sitting in a circle, there's nothing other than experience and time on this earth, that's all I have, there's no other difference whatsoever. Like I have as much to learn as you guys [students]. That fits in really nicely and the management structure of our school are very comfortable with that being a teaching pedagogy, explicitly and timetabled</p>

	<p>[Note: Interview participant is a member of the board of management of the school they teach in], they're very happy with that. Like I said I'm not 100% sure if it would be as welcomed or encouraged or understood in other settings that I've been in personally before, I've taught in another school, a couple of other schools and I taught in England, and obviously I've been to college and stuff, and it wasn't until Josephine Russell's talk that I thought "I'm going to just do this, I'm going to go for it". Funnily enough, my principal at the time was sitting next to me and I'd spoken to him in the weeks previous about it and he'd given me stuff to read and he just fuelled my interest, supported me full on and was delighted someone in the school was going to take over [investigating philosophical pedagogies] and his hope was that other teachers were going to get involved. And over the years, slowly but surely, others have, you know?</p>
Interviewer	<p>What challenges have you faced with engaging in this practice? I mean, have you come across anything that has blocked the road for you in some way?</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, but I wouldn't call them road blocks, I'd call them more excuses. And I'm not trying to be mean to anybody, but there's just some people who think we <i>have</i> to, because I suppose we do have to, stick to the complete curriculum, but when you see it [philosophy with children] in action, when you see the results, you're willing to use discretion time which allowed in the curriculum, you're willing to bend some of the objectives in SPHE [Social, Personal and Health Education], in Learn Together [Educate Together ethical education curriculum], history, English, all of these things, science even, ethics. You're willing to be creative with your planning and your explanation, your rationale for why you're doing this intervention. But if</p>

	<p>you don't see the benefit of it or you're not that confident doing those sessions, because at the end of the day you are allowing children to say more or less what's in their head, and some teachers don't like that, they think it's a little bit too free, but I can see then how you could say that there's no time to do that in the curriculum, there's too much to do. But from [my] personal experiences, there's lots of time, there's plenty of time.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So to what extent would agree or disagree that philosophy with children is concerned with democratic education and a democratic society? I know there's quite a bit to that question...!</p>
Participant	<p>No, no, I know what you mean. Like, at the end of the day, education, primary education, it's just another block, or more of a foundation really for the child. And I suppose without a concern for democracy and an understanding of what it is and of equality, their foundations would be weak it would follow. They go to secondary school, they go to college, and they mightn't be willing to join, like, local meetings and stuff, you know, because they might be afraid to speak out or to talk, or even the very basic of public speaking, that type of confidence [needed] comes from these practices. So your engagement and your willingness to participate often, like I've seen it with my own family, I have too brothers and one would be really actively engaged in the local community and the other would run a mile if he was asked to talk at anything, and he's highly intelligent and a great person, I suppose it can come down to nerves or shyness. But it means your self-esteem and your self-image is that of a person who can share their opinion in a group and who feels that it's ok to share their opinion and who feels like they might have good ideas going forward about how things could be done or</p>

	<p>how you could help or assist or how you could be part of the community. For me, I learn every time we do it [philosophy with children sessions] and I see myself improving and, like I said before, I just think it's an unbelievably solid foundation for a child even for just an open mind for learning in other curricular areas, I just think the confidence it gives them helps them across the curriculum number one, the fact that they feel absolutely valuable and, you know, <i>equal</i> to me as a teacher and to the other children gives them a sense of "you know what, I can kind of do <i>anything</i>". And sure we're talking about democracy, I mean what do we mean by democracy at the end of the day? What I want it to be anyways is that they feel empowered, that they feel like they have something of value to share, whatever it is, even if it's just their opinion, that they feel like it is ok to join committees or organising committees, whatever it may be around the country, that they feel valued enough to think "I'm important as well, I have something to give and I would be happy to work in a group". You know, all of these things is what society needs in my opinion, just coming together as opposed to just listening to one person telling you what to do and everyone else just chipping in. So really just many voices and many opportunities for those voices to be heard and for change, that's real democracy. An equality-based experience for them [children]. I think this is a foundation, there's loads more [learning experiences], but I think they will always remember, either explicitly or implicitly, whatever way it comes back to them when they're older, I think this kind of foundation is really important for them.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, you said some really interesting things about the idea of it [philosophy with children] and equality. I find it kind of funny that all of the skills which philosophy with children can improve are all seen</p>

	<p>as highly desirable by educational policy-makers and the Dept. of Education but yet when it comes down to supporting and helping to develop it teachers are kind of left on their own without much guidance and they tend to regard it from a technical conception, like with learning outcomes and competencies and so on. So that's why I think it's so interesting to talk with yourself...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, well, it's like when you're conscious that you're looking for people and you're ticking off the talking that they give [oral proficiency], you're marking the columns [on an school inspector's checklist], any of that silliness, children are also conscious. They're uptight, they're tense. When it's just a fully valued input from that child, and it takes time, it takes time to stop yourself from talking when it's not your turn as a teacher, it takes to learn not to "sand over" somebody's opinion because you might think the person sitting beside them might think it's a little bit "oooh" [disagreeable]. But once you've gotten over <i>yourself</i> and gotten away from your own prejudices or anxieties or worries, and obviously once it's not defamatory or racist or homophobic or any of those things, obviously you might have to step in then, when it gets going like that and you can get out of your own way and you can just discuss, the same as if you turned on the tv and you wanted to see a quality discussion and then someone [on the screen] keeps interrupting you'd think "ah, this a is a load of rubbish, the debate is awkward, it's unfair", whatever, sometimes the very odd time you see people sitting around a table talking fairly, it's amazing, well that's what we're going for. That's what the kids should feel on a par with and that should be the way it is. They are now experts in that and they can go forward into their next class even if the structure isn't the exact same, their demeanor, their self-confidence, their attitude</p>

towards others' opinions is already formed. You *can't* mark that or grade that and why would you want to? If you're trying to measure even self-esteem, you can have a check-list or all these things but that isn't the *point*, everybody's self-esteem can be raised a little bit, you don't have to have a problem to have your self-esteem raised, it's just a good thing. But yeah, I do agree with you, trying to insert into the curriculum or those that design the curriculum want it to be measured and composed of "blocks", that would just take away from the organicness. That's the key to it, once you develop the skills you can talk about anything, it *can* be something like "bullying", it *can* be something like "puberty", the stuff that *is* on the curriculum, stuff that we need to talk about, it could be the Armenian genocide, a terrorist attack or something even more contentious. But it's always child led. And I don't have to come up with topics to talk about because there's so many things every single day, I note the topics that we might talk about, and it's just amazing because you do become more conscious and they become more conscious, they challenge themselves to think about something and to form an opinion, and if they're not ready to share their opinion, they challenge themselves to listen and to find out a little bit more from those around them so they can then see "am I comfortable now with my opinion? Is it an opinion I'd like to put my name to or is it talking for the sake of talking?". Because at the end of the day when you do put your head above the parapet or you do talk, you are creating an image of yourself, so it is a courageous thing to do as well. So what we want is when you have something to say you say it, but you don't say it in a way where you're [coming across as] a bully, like you know exactly the right answer and everyone else around must be wrong because they're different from you. I'm kind of going off point a little bit, but that's what we're

	<p>aiming towards, so how can you measure that? Like, there's a speaking and listening strand or unit [in certain parts of the National School curriculum] if you're really that worried about tying it [philosophy with children] in, but there's so many other things. Like, you can look at a picture or art and have a philosophical discussion. Or even science, there's so many ethical scenarios in science, there's history and dilemmas in the past. Like, we [participant's class] had the most wonderful discussion we ever had when we were talking about the 1916 Rising (Ireland's Easter Rising, 1916) and even <i>that</i>, and some children knew very little about it, like in some schools it's [a case of] learning the anthem and the names of the heroes of 1916, in my class they were asking "were they heroes?", "what decides a hero?", "what about the other people?", but they way that they decided to look at it from so many different angles, and we came up with a question then about two brothers, one was just an ordinary guy who wanted to provide for his family, the Lockout [The Dublin 1913 Lockout] was a couple of years before that, so he joined the army [British Army]. The other brother was disgusted and he joined the rebels [Irish Volunteers, participants in Easter 1916 Rising] and it [the discussion] was about who was right and who was wrong. But to think that that's the kind of conversation we had, that came organically out of celebrating 1916, I was so proud of the children for initiating that kind of angle to historical stories, and also the sense of "well, how can we believe that, is this all true?", it's just amazing, stuff you would never have taught them, their minds are open to look at things from lots of different angles with confidence. Not trying to be disrespectful to any history or memories, but they are just more open.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I think they are far more capable than I had ever given them credit for. I remember one session that I did,</p>

	<p>and they asked me if they could discuss it, was about the same sex marriage referendum [Friday May 22nd 2015 Ireland voted to approve changing the Constitution to extend civil marriage rights to same-sex couples] and I think it was one of the most balanced and open discussions that I heard compared to what I heard on the radio</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, exactly. But when we try and think of that in a context, and not to be critical of any other school or anything like that, had they not had a structure for sharing their opinions and an opportunity or a feeling of equality, there's no way you would have had that [discussion]. But you have to have that structure in place and provide a space. I think you could have a couple of process skills mentioned in the curriculum, but that's where it stops. They come up with the topics that they want to discuss and they come up with the balance, naturally. I think that's what we all have naturally ourselves, but it's suppressed in school. And that leads to angry managers in jobs, angry leaders, angry teachers, angry nurses, like, it leads to frustrated people in society. What we're looking for is balanced people in society, that's what I'm looking for in my opinion anyway.</p>
Interviewer	<p>That's a fair point, because asides from anger or frustration for whatever reasons, self-identity crises or being unable to cope with serious challenges to ones identity may take a more extreme or even tragic form, people being under pressure and unable to deal with that pressure...</p>
Participant	<p>Some consequences can be unthinkable alright, there are certainly plenty of examples of it in the news. I do think though that you never stop learning, and once you're comfortable with that [idea], that your opinion is</p>

	<p>as valuable as anyone else's, it mightn't be scientific or technical or any of the things you might think are "desirable", but if you're in school and the teacher is only focusing on the people who are good at maths or good at science, you're going to feel so disillusioned. But if you feel that you are respected just for your opinion, my God, your mind is open to anything. So it's mind-boggling for me to think that someone wouldn't feel that this is suitable in primary or that it's too dangerous or risky or you're giving them [children] a big head [inflated ego] or any of these things I've heard from colleagues, not necessarily colleagues from our school, but other teaching colleagues, it's frightening. Deep down what you're doing is giving them a sense of "I respect you, I value your opinion as much as I value the guy that got ten out of ten in his Irish spelling". It's as simple as that, that's genuine. And that can only raise you self-esteem and your willingness to participate across the curriculum, you know.</p>
Interviewer	<p>It's been a pleasure to chat with you this afternoon, thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed...</p>
Participant	<p>No, sure thank you for coming out to the school, without yourself, like I've be banging the drum on my own, and bringing fresh blood and more impetus, and even getting teachers to ask themselves [questions], like I know last year we set a special interest group, or maybe it was the year before, it hasn't completely taken off, but I spent four years in the resource role [resource teacher], I found that I had the time to look more closely at Thinking Time.</p>
Interviewer	<p>This is probably completely down to me being biased, but I do feel that there is a general surge of interest, not necessarily in philosophy for children as a</p>

	<p>model or a methodology or anything like that, but in more philosophical approaches, more equality, more democracy, not even just in education, but in our society, that citizens are slowly becoming aware of the idea of involvement in issues of equality...</p>
<p>Participant</p>	<p>Absolutely, and that's what you want, you want people and children, teachers and family to know that you <i>don't</i> have to just accept everything. You <i>can</i> challenge things. You can question things. You can look at things differently than you were taught, differently than by the media or even your own family. Without disrespecting anyone, you're well within your right to look at two sides to every point and to form your opinion based on the best evidence you can find and not on pure notion or blind loyalty, or ignorance. Like, all of these things, I believe anyway, make us better citizens. At the end of the day, I'm a citizen and so is an eleven year old child in my class, an equal citizen. And I'm not just talking about them or me, I'm talking about all of us. Society will be better if there are citizens who are more active, more participatory, working together, collaborative, more understanding, more patient. I want to say tolerant, but that's not the exact meaning, and when we look at what we're trying to do when we do Thinking Time or philosophy, that's <i>exactly</i> what we're aiming at. So to think that they are the skills that our politicians need, that our teachers need, the parents and the community leaders, they're the qualities we all need for a more harmonious kind of society and community. And that's all we're trying to do, to develop them [qualities] from an early age and to show the value of them, and how practicing them together as a group becomes part of who you are and they're already in there so just allowing them to come out, making you feel better, about yourself and your relationship to others.</p>

Interviewer	A little bit like putting in place the building blocks for something way bigger than you...
Participant	<p>Yes, because I would have people saying “ah, there are serious discipline issues in the class”, so why not give it a try. Not as a one or two week intervention when they [the teacher] might say “ah, it didn’t work, they’re still laughing at each other’s opinions”, it’s definitely something you have to stick at. But genuinely, if you brought a load of politicians into a room and said “right lads, what you need to do now is actually talk, to discuss things, you need value each other’s opinions, you need to come up with a programme for government that we <i>all</i> buy into” or something like that, that’s what they need, we all do, not just the kids. So we’re just giving the children as younger citizens <i>that</i> avenue and using our time in school to do it. That’s why I think it’s just so important, it’s not just a problem for children, it’s a problem for society.</p>
Interviewer	Thanks again, John, it’s been a real pleasure chatting to you.

Interview #06

Interviewee: Jemma (not real name), Suburban lived school

Date: Wednesday 13th July 201

Interviewer	Because we had already spoken in a pilot interview, I wanted to ask you a few further questions regarding the philosophical merit of philosophy with children. So, in your opinion do you think a teacher who engages in philosophy with children would benefit from having a background or some kind of training in philosophy, by which I mean, like, “academic” philosophy?
Participant	No, absolutely not, because I did some academic philosophy in the B. Ed. [Bachelor of Arts in Education], and bar a few well-known names [of philosophers] that came back to me, it didn’t resonate very well with me and my own experience. And I think that that’s what could scare other teachers from doing it [philosophy with children] because you associate it as an academic subject. But actually, the physical <i>doing</i> of philosophy for children in a classroom setting, yes the basis comes from historical philosophy, but it’s not a philosophy for children, it’s philosophy <i>of</i> education as opposed to <i>for</i> education and that’s where there’s a huge difference for me. So I don’t think it [teachers having a background in academic philosophy] would be of a major benefit at all.
Interviewer	So you see a difference, then, between using philosophy as a subject to improve education and philosophy of education as a more theory-driven way of understanding the purposes of education?

Participant	<p>Yeah, because philosophy <i>of</i> education isn't changing anything, it's quite historic, and yes it does influence education and the educational system today, but it's not an evolving thing, a lot of the study of philosophy from the past is kind of "set". Whereas I think philosophy <i>for</i> education is <i>for</i> change, is <i>for</i> evolving it, is <i>for</i> bringing it into the classroom and make it work. So that for me is the difference because I think of philosophy as a completely different alien world, even in my own head, being a practitioner of philosophy for children. I would view them as being very different.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I know you have quite young children in your class, so what are your thoughts on the philosophical nature of the discussions and some of the things the children say to you and to each other during your sessions?</p>
Participant	<p>Well, my MA (Master of Arts in Education) thesis looked at children engaging in philosophy with children and showed an emerging ability for them to philosophise. And although my study was quite specific by looking for certain criteria based on what Fisher [Robert Fisher] said should be present within a philosophical enquiry, and they were present in all but one session out of twelve sessions that I conducted. So I'm convinced that they [the children] were able to engage with it and have shown that they have an ability to engage with it on a philosophical level.</p>
Interviewer	<p>And would that have had any affect on how you view your role as a teacher?</p>
Participant	<p>Oh, absolutely. And it was said to me by the principal that it's a shame I'll be taking a career break next year as it would be nice to "keep the ball rolling"</p>

	<p>as such with that class, and although my thesis is finished and I'll be stopping my practice [of philosophy for children] for a while, I've just enjoyed it so much. I still really love philosophy for children. I think that says it all. Whether I have an opportunity or not over the next year or so, it's something that I will take with me more naturally than other academic subjects, and I would use it as a methodology first when introducing it to other schools where its not established or heard of. But I'd use it as a methodology for my teaching and then introduce it as purely "philosophy for children time" and see how that goes.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Like, as a kind of foundation stone or something like that?</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, exactly.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Just going on what I've been talking about with all the other teachers that I've talked to, it seems to be kind of like a one-way street...</p>
Participant	<p>Oh, there's no turning back. The positive aspects of it you only see by doing it. And even if other teachers in your school come up to you and say "oh, I really like what you've done there" or "that's really interesting, how did you do that" or "how do I do it or go about it" and different things like that, it has a ripple effect in a school. When it starts, it starts small. Someone has to start it. I was lucky in that it was already started in our school. But now the ripples are getting bigger and its kind of broadening out and more and more classes are doing it, and now this year alone all the infant classes, junior and senior infants [four to five years and five to six years old] have all experienced philosophy with children sessions. Which in any other school it might only start at a more senior level perhaps. And in our</p>

	<p>school only one or two of the more senior classes are doing it where there are at least five, I think, five junior classes doing it who are going up into the senior classes. So from that side of things, someone has to start it, but when it is [started], you can see in ways how kind of easy it is. Because the children need it, the teacher is just the facilitator, they can start things but it's the children that roll with it. You are <i>constantly</i> learning, I saw that when doing my Masters, the conversations and the emerging hypotheses from the children using the same picturebooks with different classes were all completely different. And I think as a teacher the most exciting aspect of it is that it's never the same. As a teacher, you're used to your plans, you know what's going to come up, you have the same class or year group or whatever, we're doing "time" and "maths" or whatever, but philosophy is never "set" [stagnant], it's never just "one way". So I think for a teacher, the excitement of that is why you wouldn't turn back, because you know the possibilities are endless.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I see. Something that I'd be interested in is to hear what your view is on a criticism of philosophy with children in that it's lacking in philosophical "merit". As you said to me, it seems to be different or evolving for the teacher, the children engage with it, it seems to be quite affective for the teacher in an educative kind of way, so there is quite a lot of ground there for philosophical exploration...</p>
Participant	<p>I think you hit the nail on the head there, you would never really associate, I suppose, philosophy with emotions, but for me, my experience has been an emotional one. I love hearing what the children have to say, it gets me excited, the children themselves are excited. The last day of school there [three weeks previous to interview] we said to them we have a movie</p>

	<p>or a story or whatever, and they said “no teacher, can we do philosophy”. For them to have the awareness to say that they would like to do it, instead of maybe going out to play or things that children would be supposedly more interested in doing, I think says a lot about the emotional influence of philosophy on children. You know, that it’s a desire, it’s something that they <i>want</i> to do, it’s not something that’s forced on them.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yes. I remember speaking at a conference and after [I had given my presentation] a member of the audience said “that all sounds great, but what about children with oral language deficiencies or English as an Additional Language issues, how are they included?” and I struggled a bit to answer that particular question. I know that there is more than oral language involved [in collaborative philosophical enquiry] but I didn’t really articulate it adequately and I was just wondering, I know you are quite interested in EAL and philosophy with children, I’d be interested to hear your insight into a question like that.</p>
Participant	<p>Well, even though it was very much based on my own context, in my experience for my thesis, <i>all</i> the children engaged with it and EAL children no less than any other child. And if they said “no” or chose not to speak, it wasn’t due to a lack of understanding through not having the vocabulary or the speech. They were just passing their turn just like any other child for whom English was a first language. They were just <i>so</i> part of the whole process, the circle, the speaking, everything. Other than walking in and hearing a child and them not having the vocabulary or the language, you would not know just visually which child was EAL or which child had a language difficulty. There was one child who was deaf, not profoundly, but quite severely, and he engaged. Now, when I was transcribing [the children’s</p>

	<p>discussion] I couldn't understand <i>every</i> word he was saying, whether it was a buzz word or a key word or whatever it was, but he spoke nearly every time he had the opportunity. And also with the EAL children, the development and the growth in them, from one or two word utterings to fuller sentences. I, probably, overemphasised the phrases [as part of participant's data analysis for thesis] "I think...", "I agree with..." or "I disagree with... because..." they like someone else's idea. And I know that [kind of reasoning] is more down to their young age, but from an early stage I was not afraid for them to say "I agree with whoever" because they're still thinking about the concept of "I agree with that person because I <i>like</i> that", you know? [students thinking] "I <i>like</i> that and we think the same and I agree with them for that reason". Like, it takes work. But once the process is in place, EAL children, language difficulties, deficiencies, there's no lacking. Now, there were children with ADHD or autism and that kind of stuff in another class that I've done it with and it is more taxing. They're not able to sit for as long, or... like, you have to change the bar, the bar that they might be reaching for. Like, maybe just aim for one tip around [children tip the person next to them after they have finished speaking to indicate it's the other person's turn to speak] at first. You know, just change or alter it for the class. It doesn't mean that someone isn't able to do it, or there's children who aren't able to do it every single one of them is, and that's why I use visual stimuli, I used picturebooks, because even though there is <i>some</i> language in them, the picturebooks themselves <i>are</i> a language. And visually the children can connect with that. So even if they don't have the oral skills, that's why the visual helps.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah. I remember when I observed one of your sessions, there was a girl who would have had English</p>

	<p>as an Additional Language, and to my ear I found it hard to understand what she was saying, but I could tell she was trying to express herself and she was trying to form the language, and you understood her and were able to get a certain grasp on what she was trying to say. And that's an understanding that <i>you've</i> come to, so for me it speaks to me that P4C is not just entirely focussed on children, that there is an affectation for the teacher as well, there's a kind of a reciprocal thing...</p>
Participant	<p>Absolutely, and I would include that as an element of dialogue. For me, it wasn't a case of something concrete, of black and white answers, like he said this and she said that, but from their gestures and facial expressions, trying to grasp their meaning from their words... Sometimes you do be afraid that you're putting a word in their mouth, but for them they can go "no" or "yes" [depending on their enthusiasm]. By conversing with them one-to-one within the session, they feel even more part of it, because they can understand what is being said. And often whenever I can give my own thoughts or wonderings into the discussion, in the beginning with the EAL children, I might overly pronounce my words or gesture what I'm trying to say, to just add to that being aware as a teacher and a practitioner that there are going to be children in your classroom that have varying needs, be it language or speech or different things, so you just accommodate them in a normal setting. You know, like English, maths, any of those might be above someone as an EAL [child], as the case is the same.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Yeah, that multi-faceted element of learning, multi-disciplinary practice, is something that I think I struggled to get across I think when I was faced with that question [at the conference]. Another criticism I wanted to get your take on is the idea of</p>

	instrumentalism, that philosophy with children is just another “tool” or an “initiative” to be rolled out, and for those whom a slow growth or developmental approach just does not figure in their outlook.
Participant	<p>I think that has to be taken into the context of the school. I would like to think that the children in our school would always think their opinion is valued. So in that regard, I didn't have to do too much groundwork, more like the physical setting and the process, like sitting in a circle, staying sitting down, using a speaking object to allow the children to know that everyone will get a turn and to wait and the importance of listening, so laying those kind of foundations in early years would allow a teacher in first or second class to continue on more easily with participatory thinking. Mine [foundations which participant laid with students] was very prescribed I think.</p>
Interviewer	<p>I see. When you mention the school there, do you think that schools are or can be democratic places?</p>
Participant	<p>I think something like that has to come from the top, it has to be led by in-school management, the principal has to have the idea or an ideology almost, so that the staff know that it is a democratic setting and that it naturally filters into the classroom. If the staff feel respected and valued, that's just how the children should feel as well.</p>
Interviewer	<p>As I'm not a teacher, I was quite surprised about how much a principal of a school can lead the way, I never would have thought how much revolved around he or she getting behind or promoting something...</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, because as a teacher, if you're the one saying “I want to do this”, it's very hard being one voice</p>

	<p>amongst so many. But if the main voice in the school is saying something, it will naturally fall into place more easily. Like, if you think of a football team with a coach, the players are going to work for the coach if the coach is fair. There's that desire that you don't want that principal to have to worry about the stuff on the ground so you work to the best of your abilities, you want to work for that person and as a teacher there's naturally that kind of responsibility. So in terms of the democratic element, if it's led from the top it's much easier for the rest to fall into place and the children should feel that in the classroom.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What are your thoughts on the idea of philosophy with children being a ground up kind of a "movement", whereas leadership might be more of a top down kind of idea, like for someone like yourself, you seem to have developed your practice organically...</p>
Participant	<p>Well, yes <i>and</i> no, like it was already being practiced in the school so I had an idea of it, but certainly not an idea that was as well informed as it is now. But I mean, there are things, not even just with philosophy, but certain ways of teaching maths or something, if a teacher tries something out themselves, like that would be coming from the ground up. But what I'm saying is that democracy within a school setting is knowing that it's ok to try something new, or to break from the norm, because you will always have the respect and support of your principal. So I don't think it's either one way or the other, I think they have to coherently work together so that you can establish one to create another.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think that it's necessary to have a space provided in schools for teachers to indulge, for want of a better word, their methodologies or to put into practice</p>

	the pedagogical theories that they would like to pursue?
Participant	<p>Things they'd like to try? Yes. I see it as being similar to things like mindfulness, you know, there are some teachers who are just naturally more inclined to that area or are just really interested in it, so their classrooms reflect that. It's neither right nor wrong, it's just that teacher's way and it allows children to have as many varying experiences throughout their eight years in primary school and then onto secondary school.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So you think a teacher bringing his or her personal pedagogical beliefs or educational principles with them...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, but I think you also have to be open. Just because you think or feel one way, does not make it right and doesn't mean you should enforce it or preach it. Like, I would be a devout Catholic and I would have a very strong belief and faith, but I would <i>never</i> push it on anyone, let alone a child. So, there are certain things you leave at the door, and then there are certain things that form more of the character and person of the child, and those kind of methodologies are what you hone in on as a teacher.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Well thank you for chatting today, I just wanted to get an understanding of your view on philosophy with children as a philosophical thing, and how the methodology of it <i>is</i> the pedagogy and the dynamic between the theory and the practice...</p>
Participant	<p>Yeah, well, I think it's also a case that the theory is there and you <i>have</i> to hear the theory. More than anything I've looked at before or studied or engaged with before, it's the practice that informs it. You don't want to over-theorise, that would be a concern of mine,</p>

	<p>of over-theorising, because that just reminds me of what philosophy at an academic level does. You don't want to lose that creativity and natural flow of philosophy for children. It's "sink or swim", and you <i>won't</i> sink. You could look back and think "my goodness, was that my first session... but look at where I am now". It's a constant growth and I think that for a teacher is not having a fear of being wrong. Because you're <i>not</i> wrong, you're not wrong doing it in whatever way you feel it works in <i>your</i> classroom. Yes, you do need to have an idea of the philosophy behind it or the theory and the written stuff in it, but it's only by engaging in it and throwing yourself in it that you find out how it actually works. As a teacher if you're afraid of being wrong and having no safety net, you can never be wrong and you can never grow. With this [philosophy with children] <i>all</i> you can do it grow. I would think that's another element that would attract people, that there's no turning back. The first step is always the hardest, but once you've taken it on, you're on your way there [towards more developed and meaningful pedagogy].</p>
Interviewer	<p>I'm not sure if you would agree, but there seems to me that there could be teachers who are doing a variant [of philosophy with children], maybe a critical or dialogical pedagogy without realising or understanding it as "philosophical"...</p>
Participant	<p>Yes, just helping children think and not just accepting what is deemed to be the norm. They could be helping them see that little bit ahead, and each time it grows and they can see further each time or at least see things from a completely different angle. That's what they're giving children the skills to do. But you have to start off small.</p>

Interviewer	<p>Yeah, I guess what I'm trying to understand is who that teacher is, what is it that motivated them, whether it's a disposition for philosophy or maybe they're just interested in thinking or maybe it was their own school experiences earlier on in their lives...</p>
Participant	<p>There may be such a thing as a “natural thinker”, and I probably have a tendency to over-think some issues at times, but to go back to the democracy in schools thing, there's that want for fairness, in the sense that <i>all</i> children bring something to the classroom but not all children are always heard. And for me philosophy always gave me the opportunity to allow every child to have a say, to say something and not be overpowered by people who think that their way is the right way or that have more to say. The floor [for speaking and discussion] is open.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think that that desire you referred to for more fairness in classrooms and schools is connected to the idea of a school being a democratic place? Like, I'm just trying to see how the various pieces, like schools, teachers, practice, how they all fit together in terms of teachers embracing philosophy.</p>
Participant	<p>Well, everything is as interchangeable as it is inter-linkable, like it [philosophy with children] could start in one place or the other, but they are connected at some point or another. But my opinion is that it would be a great injustice to a child with EAL or some other language deficiency to exclude them from a session or from the process. The fairness is including them and allowing them to have their say in whatever way they do, whether it's not as fluent as the way we [adults] might deem it to be, in their head it's <i>thought</i> as opposed to spoken language so it makes perfect sense to them. It's our ignorance at not speaking <i>their</i> language.</p>

	So <i>that</i> idea of fairness has to come into it as well.
Interviewer	So there's this idea that it [philosophy with children] is as challenging for the teacher or facilitator as it is for the student?
Participant	Yes, and it should be. It should be challenging for the teacher.
Interviewer	That's really interesting what I think you're saying, that <i>we</i> [adults] have to learn how <i>they</i> [children] think, as in play, thought, language, the lines aren't as defined...
Participant	Yeah, and even with things like that, like I know we have Áistear [Áistear, the Early Years Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)] now, as in some things are more play-based [learning through play], but the idea of "ok, it's maths time" or "it's English time now", in younger classrooms that should not be the case because it should all just flow and be inter-linkable. I know structure is needed and so is the idea of routine, but their minds are constantly thinking and learning, there's no division, and so their world as such should be joined as one. That would enable them to think better in my opinion.
Interviewer	I see. I was interested before in drawing some kind of a "map" of teachers who do philosophy, I suppose in some ways that's really just me trying to find how I can better relate to teachers since I have a lot in common with them but yet I am not one of them...
Participant	I don't think it's a case of drawing a solid map, I don't think anyway. I mean, there will obviously be similar paths or similar elements and things like that, but every single teacher you come across is going to be

	<p>different. They might have the same philosophies, methodologies, outlooks on life, similar experiences in life, upbringings, backgrounds, all of that will come into play in the formation of a person or a teacher. But not one person's journey is going to be the same.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Oh yes, I understand that, absolutely, I mean rather than painting a picture of some kind of "typical" teacher [who practices philosophy with children], I'm interested in the journey you spoke about and how the different elements fit together and integrate, like someone who kind of thinks "I'd love to make my classroom more fair" and the journey they take going about [achieving] that and add meaning to what is a very challenging educative threshold that should be considered in wider philosophical terms.</p>
Participant	<p>I think an aspect of what would act as something that interconnects them [philosophical teachers] is "risk". Because the classroom teacher is taking a risk in trying this approach, the school is taking a risk in supporting or allowing the teacher to take this approach, and with every topic or subject that's brought up [during P4C sessions] there's a risk as to what comes out or what can be said. There's no one solid answer, there could be anything said within a classroom setting, so there is a risk element with beginning or starting or continuing with philosophy for children.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you think there's a degree of courage required for teachers to engage with this [philosophy with children]?</p>
Participant	<p>Absolutely. And you know, as a teacher you kind of go through college with all of this stuff where they say "it's <i>your</i> classroom" and this, that and the other, and to let those reigns go and to hand your classroom</p>

	<p>over to a class of children, it's just going against everything that you learnt where <i>you</i> should be the one in control, <i>you</i> should have the classroom management working and that kind of stuff. You're taking the risk of opening up the classroom at that moment in time to the idea that everyone in that classroom is equal. I think that should be the way anyway in a classroom, but within a philosophy for children [session], the teacher has no superiority. And letting that [idea] go is a big thing that takes courage.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Ok. And what would you say to the charge that philosophy with children just allows for all opinions to be equal, that nothing is right <i>or</i> wrong, that it is relativistic, and that perhaps to someone unused to the theory behind it might ask "well, what is the point of it if nothing is being established as right or wrong?"</p>
Participant	<p>I think with children, at times not everything <i>is</i> right in their eyes. In a philosophy for children setting they have to try and remain on topic or on task. Like you know, if they make a random statement, ok it's communicating a thought or an idea, but not specific to what's being discussed. So there certainly are times when they can say something wrong, but I would never say "everyone's opinion here is right", I would instead say "everyone's opinion here is <i>valued</i>". I mean, who decides if it's right or wrong in the first place? I don't feel like I have the power to tell someone that their opinion is right or wrong, just like if I say something that I feel strongly about, they shouldn't comment on how right or wrong it is either. There's no higher power saying right or wrong, that's where the community of enquiry comes. When you say "what do you think is the <i>most</i> likely or the <i>most</i> interesting thing that we heard today?", they will decide that as a community, as a group, and you're allowing them the chance as opposed</p>

	<p>to saying “ok Gillen, well what you said today, it’s important, but it’s wrong, and what [X] said there, it’s important but it’s right”. You don’t ever want to make a child feel devalued. That will turn them off doing it and not want to do it. But by telling them that everything they say is important, they already have a sense of being valued. It’s developing the self to develop the community.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Is it a case, do you think, that the more they [children] engage with philosophy, the more enabled they become at good thinking, or reasonableness, which could then in turn become some kind of logical criteria?</p>
Participant	<p>I think it becomes a more natural way of their thinking. Because their thinking becomes more developed, they can naturally apply it to various situations outside of philosophy. Although we’re taking philosophy as a single entity [standalone subject], it should be just part of their being. You know, we could be doing maths stations or English stations or something like that, and a child from junior infants [four to five years old] turns around to you and says “I like your idea, I agree with you because I like this, but I disagree with you because I don’t like <i>this</i> [part of it]”, and you wonder how this four year old could come to value their point and to be able to support it. And that’s where it comes in, you’re taking it out [of everyday life] and making it a single entity to make it doable [accessible for children], to learn the foundations in the hope and with the prospect that if it was to run throughout the whole school that they [children] would be leaving 6th class [twelve to thirteen years old] as highly enabled thinkers. And the road doesn’t end there, the possibilities are all open, and that’s what you want for children.</p>

Interviewer	That's really interesting what you mentioned there, that we [adults, teachers, educators etc.] have, like, extracted philosophy as this isolated thing and we're trying to incorporate it in somehow when really it's kind of just what we should see as "thinking".
Participant	I'm not belittling it by saying it's wrong to take it out as a separate entity, because to enable children to have the skills, they do have to experience it and see it as a separate entity for it to then become natural. A little bit like when you see a word where the letters at the beginning and end are the same but the middle letters are mixed up [typoglycemia], it becomes natural to you. So you're taking it out to then bring it back in, so it does have to be extracted I think, but I think it's the extraction that develops it.
Interviewer	So you mean that the capacity for it is already there, you just have to tease it out...
Participant	Yes, you have to nurture it, try and get it to grow and then work it back in.
Interviewer	It's been really fascinating to hear your thoughts today, thank you so much for taking the time to chat.
Participant	Not at all, I hope you don't mind me waffling away there!
Interviewer	No, no, what you were talking about really rang some bells with myself. Best of luck on your travels, I hope it all works out for you and sure please do stay in touch.
Participant	I will of course.

Appendix 08: Philomena Donnelly's Thinking Time Process

Donnelly, P. 2001. A study of higher-order thinking in the early years classroom through doing philosophy. *Irish Educational Studies*, 20(1), pp.278-295.

The classroom tables are pushed to the sides of the room and the children and teacher sit in a circle with no designated places. The topic for discussion and the opening speaker are chosen by consensus the previous day. This allows time for reflection on the topic. The child opening the discussion makes his/her initial statement and then tips [with their fingers/hand] the child next to him/her. If this child wishes to speak s/he does so, and then tips the next child, if not s/he passes on the tip. When the tip returns to the original speaker, the circle is complete. The children continue tipping around the circle contributing, reflecting and questioning the subject for discussion and the contributions of others. To conclude, the tip is passed in the opposite direction. No vote or conclusion is reached. The thoughts and questions are left open. The teacher acts as facilitator to the discussion, contributing when appropriate. After Thinking Time, the children lie on the floor and listen to relaxing music. This they call Cloud Time (Donnelly, 2001: pp.280-281).